

POPULAR TALES.: CLARA: OR LOVE AND SUPERSTITION.

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POPULAR TALES.

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CLARA: OR LOVE AND SUPERSTITION.

BY DON TRUEBA TELESFORO D'F COSIO.

Gil Pérez was one of the most narrow-minded individuals. Having never received the advantage of an enlightened education, and his natural talents being on a very limited scale, he had imbibed all the vulgar prejudices of which a weak mind is susceptible. His days had been spent in making money, and reciting long prayers. Gil Pérez was a furious devotee, who firmly believed every syllable that a friar chose to utter, and he was very lavish in dealing out damnation to any lukewarm christian who chanced to come in his way. His religious temperament had increased to a tenfold degree with the progress of years, until it settled at length into a sullen gloom, and a bitter feeling of enthusiasm. Perhaps he felt some compunctions visitings on the score of his wealth. It had been accumulated somewhat too rapidly, even considering it was in South America; but to silence any qualms of conscience, Gil Pérez took those efficient means which the church, with no less charity than prudence, recommends to her offending children. Nothing tends so much to tranquillize a restless and guilty soul, as bestowing one's money on convents, and ordering some thousand masses (price 2s 6d. each) to be said every year. Gil Pérez adopted this orthodox method of setting to work in order to gain repose. He associated with friars—made a new settlement in favor of convents upon every case of emergency—heard two masses in the morning, and recited interminable prayers in the evening. Yet, strange to say, despite of so many and so much praying—despite of the edifying company which he kept, and the great sums which he paid for the advantage, the poor man was never a jot the more tranquil, more happy, or more satisfied with himself and his fellow-creatures.

The wife of Gil Pérez was also a devotee, although not quite so melancholy religious as her husband.—She also believed in the efficacy of masses, long prayers, friars, beads, &c. &c.; but then she prudently conceived there were other ways of passing one's time in this vale of tears more consonant with common sense, than preserving a fixed, lugubrious expression of countenance, fasting, and the use of the discipline, sighing, groaning, preaching, croaking, railing against sinners, and abusing the d—l every hour of the day. Not but, that like a good devotee she loved scandal dearly; but then she was more varied in selecting the objects of animadversion. Young, handsome girls especially called forth her zeal. She had their welfare so much at heart, that she could not endure to see a beautiful specimen of her sex cross the street, on account of the great danger there is in the possession of charms. Fortunately Dona Josephina had never had this awful peril to encounter; her motives were therefore perfectly disinterested, she acted from mere love of charity, and she never felt so happy as when she saw a female pass by in all the security of age and ugliness.

Gil Pérez was blessed with two nieces that would have made the happiness of a reasonable relative. The two girls were no less remarkable for the beauty of their persons than the superiority of their moral endowments. They were, however, of very different dispositions. Agnes, the elder, possessed a strong will, and a boldness of spirit that would shrink from no danger. Clara, her younger sister, was made up of all the softer attributes of her sex. Agnes was endowed with no ordinary talents: she had an inquiring mind, and was averse to yield her judgment to any power except that of conviction. Her temper too, was irritable, although she possessed one of the kindest and most generous hearts. Her sister, though not so rich in the stores of talent, was by no means deficient in intellect: she was less brilliant, less witty than Agnes; but the gentleness of her character was, in a great measure, responsible for any deficiency of mind which a careless observer might discover at first.—From her infancy, Clara had been taught to bend blindly to the slightest sign of parental authority; she would never inquire into the justice or injustice of one act.

There was also a striking contrast between the style of beauty of the two sisters. That of Agnes was of a more intellectual character—Clara's was more remarkable for a soft and winning expression. Agnes appealed at once for admiration to the mind, and she never failed to command it—Clara won gradually and unobtrusively her way into the heart. The eyes of Agnes were full of brilliancy—those of Clara were composed of softness and gentle tenderness. Agnes possessed an elegant and commanding figure, and her carriage was distinguished for its ease and dignity—Clara was not so striking, her frame was more delicate, and although all her movements were remarkable for feminine grace, yet they escaped observation at first, from the retiring modesty and shrinking nature of her disposition.

Unfortunately Agnes and Clara had been left orphans, unprovided for and unprotected, at a very early period of infancy, and they had fallen under the care of two fanatic devotees quite incompetent to appreciate the value of the gems intrusted to their guardianship. Don Gil, wrapped up in the gloom of his religious reveries, was not susceptible to that tenderness of heart which would have operated in a more enlightened mind. Dona Josephina, on her side, was a weak, credulous woman, who would not certainly put herself forward to harm her fellow-creatures; but who, at the same moment, was totally incapable of contributing the least share to their happiness or comfort.—Besides, Agnes and Clara were in the possession of youth and great personal beauty, and this, in the opinion of the *beata*, was a misfortune amounting almost to sin. Had her nieces been deformed, aged, and disagreeable, they would have possessed far more valuable charms in the estimation of their aunt.

Every one is acquainted with the vast influence which the clergy exercise in Spain. Gil Pérez was, as a matter of course, laboring under the yoke. He was the nominal master of his house, whilst the real power was engrossed by a friar of the order of bare-footed Franciscans.

The ascendancy which Father Bastos had acquired over the mind of Don Gil, and the absolute sway which he exercised in the weak Indiana's house, was, to Agnes, a source of continual misery and indignation.—She dwelt constantly on the vexatious subject, until a rooted hatred for the usurper was engendered in her heart. This hostile feeling was not long a secret to the friar, and his vindictive nature was roused, whilst his policy pointed to the danger of so powerful an enemy. The superior understanding of the young girl, and her decision of character, were serious obstacles towards that plan of absolute, despotic dominion which he had acquired in the *Indiana's* family. To remove this impediment was the scheme which, at present, occupied the friar's mind. It was indispensable to check the evil before it could produce a corresponding effect in any of the other members of the family. Like every holder of usurped power, Father Bastos trembled lest his slaves should awake to a sense of their degradation, and assert their freedom.

The scheming friar had already harbored the thought of bringing Don Gil to bequeath his fortune to the convent. There was nothing extraordinary in the plan, and the success with which such attempts are crowned in Spain emboldened him to proceed with buoyant hopes in his undertaking. He watched for one of Don Gil's most religious moods, and having worked on the superstitious fears of the weak man, after an edifying sermon, continued, "And yet, dear brother, what avails the fulfilment of our religious duties, when the weak flesh is rebellious? Blind deference to the voice of the church—"

"Nay, Father Bastos, interrupted the gloomy Indiana, "no one in my family, I trust, pretends to dispute that power."

"Your eldest niece does. I am sorry to find her imbued with the spirit of the world. The dangers that surround her path are manifold and awful, and I dread to think what may be her future destiny."

Gil Pérez felt duly alarmed at the words of his ghostly counsellor. Besides, he had observed in the conduct of Agnes certain tokens which awakened his anxiety. He fancied he observed in her a reluctance to long prayers. He never heard her speak a single

word in praise either of convents or friars. Nay, she went once so far as to question the necessity of attending two masses a day. Now all these were fearful symptoms of a dislike to piety, nearly akin to irreligion. Father Bastos, on his side, readily availed himself of the occasion to work upon his jaundiced feelings and superstition, and he succeeded to the fullest extent.

The life led by the young girls, one may easily imagine, was one continued series of misery and annoyance. Dona Josephina was an indefatigable sentinel.—Cerberus was a mere blind puppy to her in point of alertness. When they went to church (the only pastime allowed in the Indiana's family) the activity of his wife redoubled. Don Gil himself being deeply engrossed in working the salvation of his soul, had no time to observe the conduct of his nieces. Whilst he remained at church he was profoundly absorbed in devotion, and no event short of the altar tumbling down would drive his attention from his rosary and prayer-book.

Dona Josephina was not so selfish. Certainly she thought of her own salvation, but then she had an eye (way, two) for that of other people. Her nieces were a source of the deepest interest and solicitude. Sensible as she felt of the unfortunate gifts which nature had bestowed upon them, it was her duty to keep always on the alert. Accordingly, with exemplary self-abnegation, instead of fixing her eyes on her prayer-book, she kept them steadfastly on the girls. This was certainly an extraordinary instance of charity.—Nothing escaped the observation of the pious sentinel and when they returned home, the nieces, in addition to the church service, were obliged to undergo an interminable lecture from their zealous aunt. Woe to them, if by an unlucky chance, they had coughed, or sneezed, or uttered any sound, which might be construed into a desire to draw the attention of the men! Woe—woe, if they had lifted their eyes but for a single second from their prayer-books! for these grievous offences were visited with all the profuse eloquence of religious acrimony. Nay, it was not enough that they had not *looked*—to be *looked* at was, in the estimation of the pious aunt, almost as bad. Such an existence was a perfect martyrdom; and the teasing preaching, railing, was so great, that really the nieces deeply regretted at times the enviable situation of those females, who having neither youth nor beauty, were fortunately exempt from the infliction of their pious persecutor.

This system produced very different effects on the two sisters. In Agnes, it tended to embitter her feelings against her tormentors, and to suggest the idea of bursting from the thralldom in which she suffered. She was conscious of the insult offered to her understanding, no less than of the injustice and cruelty practised on her free will. Clara, from the mildness of her character, was averse to any display of opposition. She preferred to pine away her days in secret sorrow, rather than show the least symptom which might afford scandal to the neighbors. A being so soft, so kind, shrank from the task of inflicting the least pain even on her tormentors, and she had accordingly chosen her destiny for life—calm resignation, silent tears, and, perhaps, an early grave!

Don Gil Pérez and Father Bastos had already conversed copiously on the propriety of sending Agnes to a nunnery. Clara, who had hitherto been blindly submissive to all their whims and fancies, might ultimately follow the example of her elder sister. It was no difficult matter for the friar to persuade the credulous and hypocondriac Indiana, that a nunnery was the only safe retreat for a girl of such strong passions and wayward will as Agnes had evinced. With regard to Dona Josephina, she of course, approved most cordially of a plan which was to render nugatory the baneful possession of that youth and beauty with which, most unfortunately, the life of Agnes was at present saddled. The only difficult point was to gain the consent of the girl herself, and this indeed they anticipated would not be easily obtained. But it is well known in Spain that when a family is firmly bent on sending a young girl to a nunnery, they are sure to succeed, unless, indeed, the girl is so perverse as to prefer breaking her heart, or going raving mad—a choice which sometimes girls have been known to make from a spirit of contradiction. This, however, is a far lesser calamity, in the estimation of a hot and zealous devotee, than the horror of seeing a daughter, a sister, or a niece, falling in love with a man, when they ought to

Name given to those Spaniards who make their fortunes in America.

preserve their affections for the exclusive use of heaven!

From the moment that Agnes evinced a decided opposition, the life of the poor girl became one interrupted series of trials and vexations. Nothing that could harass the mind, or torment the heart, was omitted, in order to oblige her to alter a resolution which she seemed determined to abandon only with her existence. She was teased and worried by the aunt in the most tantalizing manner; and when she had gone through this infliction, her uncle came forward with a lugubrious voice and aspect to all the benefit of his gloomy rebukes. Nor was the fair behemoth whenever the work of torturing was going on. The tyrannists were indefatigable in their task, till at the end of a month they had fully succeeded, not in making a nun of Agnes, but in impairing her health, and exasperating her temper. She fell ill; but this circumstance did not in the least tend to relax the cruelty of her religious executioners. They very coolly and solemnly announced that this was a judgment, and that the hand of God was visible in this *infamy*, which was sent purposely at once to punish her disobedience and obstinacy, and to signify that the patient should take the holy vows of religion.

Agnes recovered, but her resolves had not suffered from the effects of her malady. Her mind, instead of losing any of its tone, had become more firm in consequence of the persecuting sib. was obliged to endure. She was fully aware of the atrocious injustice perpetrated against her inclinations; and nothing, not even the fear of the most appalling death, could force her to break a resolution, which was, as it were interwoven with her existence. Dona Josephine neglected no means of wounding the pride of the poor victim. A series of petty, spiteful trials was systematically pursued in vain. But there was a source of pain to Agnes. She could courageously withstand the assaults of her oppressors, but was not equally proof against the tears of her sister. The aunt had been busily at work, and had partially succeeded in persuading the poor gentle girl that there was great criminality in the conduct of Agnes. Clara was made up of softness and placidity: her mind was not of that masculine order which makes men bearing all sorts of trials, rather than submit to injustice. Her gentle nature shrank from the idea of opposition, whilst her imagination, a-really imbued with strict religious notions, was excellently adapted to receive the impressions which her fanatic relatives thought proper to convey.

Father Bastos perceived, in this morbid state of Clara, a rich mine, which might be explored with advantage, and he did not allow the opportunity to escape. The poor girl was convinced of the truth and justice of the friar's observations, but the only triumph which he and his colleagues gathered from the achievement was that of adding to the misery of Agnes, without in the least altering her resolves. Many a night when silence reigned, and Agnes was thankful that the trials of the day were over, another and a far more distressing one came to perplex her mind and afflict her heart. She, alas! was compelled to endure, not indeed reprimands, for to those the gentle soul of Clara was a total stranger;—but what are a hundred times more painful—the visible tokens of her distress and sorrow.

The mischief consequent on a system of oppression is not long in making its appearance. Agnes brooded constantly over her situation. Her independent spirit felt more indignant the more she reflected. But she was not discriminating enough, in the turmoil of embittered feelings, to distinguish the pure essence of religion from its abuse; and the aversion which she had justly conceived for Father Bastos, induced her to believe that every friar was selfish and tyrannical. By a chain of argument she next began to harbor doubts, until the line between right and wrong was scarcely discernible. This tone of mind was extremely dangerous, especially in a female of such decision of character. She was driven to an extreme point, and she secretly made a vow to dare her relatives—the world—opinion—all—all rather than submit to the odious sacrifice. This resolution, under certain restrictions, would have been strictly correct; but in the wild excitement of poor Agnes' heart, she would not disguise from herself, that she considered any means justifiable in rescuing her from the present oppression.

Don Gil Perez, from a series of rebukes and sermons, had now proceeded to more violent measures.—He peremptorily confined poor Agnes to her room where he suffered no one to visit her except the hated Father Bastos. This tribulation Agnes at first endured with fortitude; nay, she felt a sort of pride in being a martyr in the cause of her *free will*; and she took a pleasure in reflecting that all the artifices and devices of tyranny were not sufficient to enslave her mind.

The imprisonment of Agnes began at length to exhaust her patience; and she was ready to adopt the most desperate plan, rather than suffer herself to continue a toy in the hands of her ruthless tormentors.—This idea once admitted into her mind, the occasion was not long wanting of putting it into execution.—Agnes had observed a gentleman looking at her with peculiar interest, as she was wont to return from church; for although the shrewdness of Dona Josephina offered an insurmountable obstacle to make such observations, what that is gratifying to the female vanity can escape the notice of a young girl! Agnes, however, had too strong a sense of propriety to afford the least encouragement to the suitor by returning his glances. She could feel no partiality for a person with whom she was totally unacquainted, and she never suffered a thought on the subject to distract her repose. Had she been blessed with other relatives—had she not been unfortunate in her natural friends and protectors—the image of the stranger would probably have been the cause of mere mirth in the family. She would have felt no hesitation in speaking on the subject, and perhaps be the first to join in the laugh against the *inamorato*.

The case, however, was very different at present.—Agnes found herself perfectly isolated in this world.—Her relatives were her obstinate oppressors; and in her sister, instead of consolation, she could only find an addition to her woe and perplexity. In this absolute want of sympathizing friends, her mind was not extravagant in reverting towards an object, which under ordinary circumstances would never have occupied her meditations. The imagination loves to conjure up images of comfort, and there is scarcely an idea, however wild and extravagant, which passing through the medium of an overheated brain and a sorrowing heart does not assume, not merely a consolatory, but a reasonable form. Such was the situation of Agnes, when, to prolong the dangerous illusion, presented to her view the subject of her present thoughts.

As she chanced to cast a glance from the small window of her room, she perceived the stranger walking to and fro opposite the house. Her attention was drawn—she caught his eye—there could be no mistake. She occupied his thoughts—probably he knew of the hardships she endured; these and other wild thoughts darted with rapidity across the imagination of the fair prisoner, and they brought consolation to her heart.

The stranger was absent at his post on the following day, and he made signs as if he wished to convey a letter. This he contrived to throw into the room. Agnes was weak enough to receive and read it—from that moment her fate was sealed. Her admirer's letter ran thus:

"I am aware of the cruel treatment you are forced to endure. Allow me to rescue from your dismal state. Trust to my honor—the more so, for the sake of that passion which I have long felt for your person and which the knowledge of your wrongs and sufferings has served to augment."

GABRIEL FUENTES."

Agnes perused this note with a feeling of pleasure and hope. Her imagination dwelt on the subject with fondness she would have been the first to condemn if another; nay, in her own self, had she not been so long the victim of oppression. Bold, daring, and extravagant as the resolution was, she made up her mind to quit her uncle's roof, and trust her destiny to the honor and affection of a man with whom she had not hitherto so much as exchanged a single word. But the proud spirit of Agnes, and the injustice of her relatives behaviour towards her, had driven her mind to burst these shackles of female restraint, which form at once the ornament and protection of the sex. To carry her plan into effect, however, was no easy task. A woman's mind, always fruitful in resources in cases of emergency, did not desert Agnes in the present.—

She called dissimulation to her aid, and by feigning to listen with a more subdued spirit to the admonitions of Father Bastos, her uncle, in hopes that she was about to be converted, relaxed in his severity, and delivered his niece from her confinement.

Agnes continued the work of deceit with perfect success. She appeared almost reconciled to the position of her relatives. She demanded only a fortnight to reconsider the proposal. Her request was easily granted, and every day that passed, the chances of her taking the veil became more certain. The gentle Clara caressed her beloved sister in all the tenderness of her affection; but, to her surprise, Agnes, instead of the calm resignation which she evinced before the family, had only bitter tears and heavy sighs for the moments of privacy with her sister.

Matters were in this state, and the *Indiano* had already begun to arrange the preliminaries for the novitiate of his niece, when one day, to their utter surprise and consternation, the intended nun was missing. The whole house was carefully searched in vain. A note, however, was found addressed to Clara, in which her sister informed her that she had trusted her fate into the care of a *husband*. This word was a thunderbolt to Gil Perez, his wife, and Father Bastos. The uncle bestowed a heavy curse on the fugitive for her deception: Dona Josephina crossed herself serviently, and declared that the event did not excite any extraordinary surprise in her—she was prepared for such a catastrophe; the vanity of the girl, and the fatal beauty which she possessed, were well calculated to lead to this result. Father Bastos delivered a long harangue on the temptations of the flesh—the manoeuvres of Satan—the weakness of human nature &c. &c. concluding with foretelling the most appalling end to the fair sinner, and asserting that such crimes called for the deepest vengeance of Heaven. They were all three of accord in one point—in feeling persuaded that Agnes had afforded an example of deception almost unparalleled and deserving the severest retribution. When they had preached, croaked, abused, denounced, prophesied, and anathematized to their heart's content, the three pious personages sat down to dinner with a very good appetite.

The system of deception followed by a young creature like Agnes would suggest melancholy thoughts, had that plan been acted upon under ordinary circumstances. But the mortifying trials which she had undergone—the prospect of new ones—and the persuasion that the only means of escaping a cruel destiny, was that of seeming to submit to it, may offer not a justification, but, at least an excuse for her imprudent and rash conduct. In the excitement of her feelings, to avoid one danger she had blindly precipitated herself into another. Had her better judgment been allowed to exercise its power with calmness and repose she would have shrunk from her headlong design.—She had been driven almost to despair; and the combined effects of indignation, sense of wrong, anger and disgust, made themselves manifest in her flight with a man who was a total stranger, and of whose character she had no other report than the one she received from himself.

Don Gil Perez heard nothing from his fugitive niece, further than she was living in reduced circumstances with her husband Don Gabriel Fuentes, a poor officer—a man of good family, but of whose moral qualifications and personal merits little more was known than that he was a professed gambler. This intelligence did not in the least affect the morose *Indiano*. On the contrary, he felt a sort of satisfaction in the anticipated misery and trials which his niece was doomed to suffer from her rash union with such a character. With all the furious zeal of a fanatic, he thundered out that he perceived clearly the hand of God in the various stages of the affair, and that it was certain Heaven had permitted the marriage of Agnes, as a just punishment for her guilty obstinacy in refusing to become a nun. This logic was satisfactory to Dona Josephina. Nor could the friar feel dissatisfied as he had succeeded in removing one impediment from the road to his schemes, if not by shutting Agnes in a nunnery at least by driving her from a home, to which, judging from the disposition of her relatives she could never expect to return.

Some months elapsed, and the name of Agnes was almost forgotten, except by poor Clara, on whom the rashness of her sister had made a painful impression.—

But a new source of anxiety came soon to alarm the family, and more specially Father Bastos. This was the presence of a visitor at the Indiano's house—a nephew of Don Gil—a ward of the *Indiano*, who had been absent to complete his studies in the University of Alcalá. This young gentleman whose name was Theodosio, had been fondly attached to his cousins, whom he had known from their infancy. Clara, especially, was his favorite—she was a mere child of twelve years old when he had last seen her. But half a dozen years make a material difference in this period of woman's existence and he was agreeably surprised when he perceived the advantageous change which had taken place in his cousin's personal appearance, as well as in the development of her mental qualities.—In fine, Clara preserved all the artless graces, all the winning manners of the girl, combined with the more refined and more intoxicating charms of approaching womanhood. The flowers of spring, and the first beauties of summer, were united in her person without distinction of season.

Youthful affection for his cousin was now exchanged for a more absorbing and manly feeling. In the society of Clara, Theodosia enjoyed a pleasure to which his heart had hitherto been a stranger. Among the females of his acquaintance he had never met one which approached so closely to his idea of female perfections. Angelic softness breathed in all her words and looks. In every trifling act, the kindness of her disposition showed itself, for Clara's supreme felicity was centered in the comfort and happiness of others: the society of such a being was not to be enjoyed with impunity, and Theodosio but too soon discovered that he was the slave of a passion, the more absorbing deep, and lasting, because of the good foundations on which it was based. His bliss was complete, when his active eye perceived that his love was acknowledged and returned, despite of the efforts which female timidity and blushing restraint were making to keep the secret from him.

The first person who observed the affection existing between Theodosio and Clara was Father Bastos, and the discovery was to him annoying in the extreme,—He had already settled it in his mind that the wealth of the *Indiano*, should go to enrich his couvent, and to the founding of another, of which he himself felt the ambition of becoming superior—from this step to a bishopric, the distance he considered short; and wild dreams of ecclesiastical preferment and greatness revelled before the imagination of the ambitious friar. He lost no time in communicating his suspicions to Don Gil. The *Indiano* at first treated the matter with indifference, assuring his monitor, that the affection of Theodosio for Clara was that of an elder brother for a younger sister. When, however, he perceived that the friar's surmises were just, the fanatic man felt no less disappointment than vexation: he again foresaw the fountain-head of evil, and the image of Agnes returned vividly to his memory.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

From Blackwood's Magazine.

1895.

CHAPTER I.

"TIME'S up, miss : look alive ! First or
third?"

"Third."

"All right ; here you are !"

A shrill whistle, and the train on the Midland line steamed out of the station. Bertha Fitzherbert, a slender girl with large dark eyes, seated herself modestly in the corner, and settled her tidy little black bag beside her. The pace increased ; and out of the dark station — for it was afternoon, and a November day — they emerged into bright light, and Bertha found time to reconnoitre her fellow-travellers. There were only two : a young

lady in deep mourning, with a thick black veil which concealed her face; and an honest-looking stout countryman, whose broad shoulders and horny hands betrayed him more at home in work-a-day than Sunday clothes.

The train was going very fast, and the young lady in black sat facing the engine.

Bertha bent forward and said in her gentle voice, "Will you not change places with me or sit beside me?"

The young lady looked up gratefully and moved to the seat next to Bertha, the countryman composed himself to sleep, and the train rushed on.

Bertha sat looking out of the window at all the flying objects: trees, hedgerows, lazy cattle, peaceful cottages, all passed like a dream before her blurred and indistinct; through the rushing sound echoed the numerous voices of her home, merry children's laughter, the father's deep voice, the mother's sweet tones — ah, that mother! — down Bertha's cheek stole two large tears and dropped with a pat on her kid glove; her companion gave a little start and watched her anxiously; more visions were stealing past — a great beech-tree, a white pony leaning over the hurdles, two boys with sunny hair and rosy cheeks perched in the highest branches, and some one else caressing the pony's mane as she fed it with chopped-up carrots — voices shouting "George! George!" — and a bright pink flush dyed Bertha's face.

Her companion gave another little start, and watched more closely.

Now came another change — a look as of a sharp, sudden pain, contracted brow, clenched lips, and two more tears, hotter, slower in falling than the former ones. Suddenly Bertha is startled to find some one kissing her once, twice, three times, and a voice repeating, "Please, please, don't cry." She turned round in her astonishment to see the veil thrown up, and the sweetest, prettiest little fair-haired face looking up to her with a quiver in the sensitive lips, as if to say, "I know this is a great liberty; but we are both young girls, so please do not mind."

Bertha smiled through her tears and kissed her warmly. "How good you are!" she said, simply.

"I cannot bear to see you cry; now I will wipe all those tears away. Are you happier now?"

"Yes, thank you, dear. I won't cry any more. Tell me what your name is?"

"Amy Gordon, and I will tell you all about myself if you promise to be happy."

"Do," said Bertha, leaning back with a

sigh; "I shall be so glad to talk to you a little. Are you travelling quite alone?"

"Yes; and echo says, are you?"

"Yes; but I am older than you are."

"Are you sure? I am older than you think; I am eighteen."

"And I am twenty-one; but I have travelled alone several times now, and am no longer frightened."

"That is very brave of you: it terrifies me dreadfully. Mamma always laughs at me for being such a coward. I don't know how I shall get on at Murch Hall," and she sighed.

"Murch Hall! you do not mean that you are going there?"

"Yes, I am. Do you know Lady Murch?"

"No; but I suppose I shall know her, for I am going to be one of her lady-helps."

"Oh, how very, very glad I am! I am going also."

"Really and truly! This is delightful! Have you ever been in service before? can you tell me anything about it?"

"No; I have never been out before," said Amy, gravely. "We all lived at home at Stanton Rectory until my father died. We thought he was very rich indeed, for we always had all that we wanted; but something happened. I will not explain how it turned out that we had only two hundred a year to live upon, and that we must work for ourselves. There are eleven of us, five boys and six girls."

"What did you do?"

"Mary and Joanna are governesses; Meta and Rosie are both married. I was the difficulty, for I did so hate teaching; but I heard of Lady Murch's situation through Miss Belfort — you know whom I mean? — member for Kingtonville; and though mamma only half liked it, she let me come. I am to be pastry-maid; it is such pretty work, and I can do it beautifully now."

"I am to be second housemaid," said Bertha; "and I am afraid I know very little about it; but I suppose one can learn easily."

"Have you had any lessons?"

"Mamma's maid showed me how to make a bed as well as she could; but she knew very little herself, for she had never been anything but a lady's-maid until we were ruined."

"Ah!"

"It was about six months ago. All the children are provided for — we have the great comfort of having rich relations; but we elder ones must work. My two brothers were obliged to leave Eton." Her

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eyes filled with tears, but she went on bravely: "I am only to get eighteen pounds a year. I know it is much higher wages than a real housemaid would get, who did not know her work; but it seems very little, does it not?"

"I am to have sixteen, and to rise if I do well," said Amy.

"Well, it will be one burden less for my father at home," said Bertha, cheerfully.

"Yes, that is the great comfort; and I am determined to think it all great fun," said Amy.

"I shall, too, as soon as I can forget Jack's face when he showed me his leaving-books," said Bertha.

"Where are they going now?"

"To Brussels, at first, then Heidelberg, or some other German college. I daresay it will all turn out for the best."

"Of course it will; and how proud you will be of their German and their great mustachios!"

"Freddy did not mind half so much as Jack."

"If you get to be head-housemaid, you will be able to help them."

"Yes; that I know will be my great delight."

"I wonder how much I shall be able to spare of my sixteen pounds," said Amy, thoughtfully.

"About six, I should think; but we cannot judge till we know what our expenses will be."

"I wonder if there is any one else in this train going to Murch Hall?"

"I wonder. It will be very exciting first meeting all our fellow-servants, and a very anxious moment also. Here we are at a station; look at that gorgeous woman!"

The door of a first-class carriage was thrown open with a bang, and a woman stood on the door-step, shouting out, "Hi! hi! you boy! give us a *Women's Parliamentary Journal*. How much?—threepence?—twopence too much for such a dirty number;" and she drew back her green silk gown and black gloves into obscurity, holding her paper gingerly. Her figure was immediately replaced in the doorway by that of a young man apparently about five-and-twenty, clad in a light-grey shooting-costume,—"Boy! *Times* and *Pall Mall*."

"We shall be glad of some news, sha'n't we, Mr. Herbert?" said the lady in green silk.

"There is nothing in the papers just now," he answered, yawning. "By-the-by, I suppose one sees the papers at Murch Hall?"

"Bless you! of course you do; two took in regular for the servants."

The *Times* twitched, and Mr. Herbert unceremoniously threw himself back and began to read.

"Well," said Mrs. Jones, "I do think."

"What do you think?" said the young gentleman, lazily.

"I was thinking that there are some beautiful advertisements this time."

A lady who had been seated quite quietly in one corner of the carriage now suddenly started up—"Excuse me, ma'am," she said; "only for one moment;" and with a dexterous twitch she possessed herself of the *Female Parliamentary Journal*, much to Mrs. Jones's indignation. She endeavored to stretch after it; but the lady in the corner placed a hand of iron on her soft, fat arm, and went on reading and holding her at the same time, murmuring, "I will not detain it a moment—not half a minute, my good woman."

For about five minutes this continued, Mrs. Jones speechless with displeasure. Then the lady loosed her with a suddenness which brought her anger to a crisis, and quite unconscious of offence began speaking in a loud, clear, oratorical tone—

"Sir," she said, addressing herself to Herbert, who, intensely amused, had been watching the scene, "a circumstance has again occurred which has much disturbed my serenity."

"Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it."

"It is these advertisements—these infernal advertisements!"

"Strong language," murmured the gentleman.

"What do you say?"

"I am all attention, I said—nothing else."

"These advertisements that constantly appear in the *Female Parliamentary Journal*—now, what is the *Female Parliamentary Journal*? answer me that. The *Female Parliamentary Journal* is the organ, the mouthpiece of the female parliamentary mind. Now, what is the female parliamentary mind? The female parliamentary mind is the modern soul or essence of politics; therefore political should be its articles, political should be its leaders, political should be its notices, and—political should be its advertisements."

"I am sure the advertisements is beautiful," said Mrs. Jones.

The lady deigned no response, but a withering look. Raising one finger in the air, she continued,—"Now, sir, the fe-

males who enter upon the parliamentary career cease to be women in — ”

“ Hear, hear ! ”

“ What do you say, sir ? ”

“ Only, very true — very true indeed.”

“ Cease to be women in the commonly accepted sense of that term of opprobrium ; they are no longer women, but females — refined, superior, intellectual, full of the cares and responsibilities of empire. Of what possible use can advertisements such as these be to such females ? — ‘ Cash’s Frilling, the most durable and satisfactory trimming for ladies’, children’s, and infants’ wardrobes.’ Are not advertisements meant to be of use to the purchasers and readers ? Should they not be characteristic of the journal in which they appear ? Again, ‘ Hair ! hair ! hair ! Ask your perfumer,’ etc., etc. Further on, ‘ Shoeberry & Co., limited,— Sewing-machines of all kinds.’ And look at this ! — ‘ Jenkin’s Children’s Powders.’ What have members of Parliament, what have political journals, to do with these things ? leave them to nurses and seamstresses. ‘ Dr. Bethel’s Food for Infants, Children, and Invalids.’ It is unworthy, useless, revolting. What have infants to do with Parliament ? what part do children and invalids play in the ever-revolving political sphere ? — answer me that.”

“ It does seem extraordinary. May I ask, madam, if you are in the House ? ”

“ No, I am not ; but I am agent for this part of the country, and now on my way to Firton for the impending election.”

“ Indeed ! Do you expect much of a contest ? ”

“ A certain John Bullus, Esq., has come forward in opposition to Mrs. Lane — a person of no local weight, but a good speaker ; and I hear that he is quite determined to carry the seat ; ” and she laughed grimly.

“ Mrs. Lane has sat before ? ”

“ She was returned without a contest three years ago.”

“ And you consider her pretty safe ? ”

“ I will answer no indiscreet questions.”

“ Ahem.” Mr. Herbert returned to his paper.

“ And may I ask, sir, if you have the distinction of writing M. P. after your name ? ”

“ Not I ! I am Sir Joseph Murch’s new footman.”

“ Gentleman-help, you mean ? ”

“ All the same thing.”

“ Pardon me ; in a few words I will endeavour — ”

“ Firton ! Firton ! ” started the nasal

tones of the Firton porter ; and Mr. Herbert, with extraordinary courtesy, jumped up to take down his fellow-traveller’s umbrella-case and mackintosh, and draw a bundle of rugs from under the seat.

“ Another time we will finish our little talk,” she said, as she got out of the train. The station was small, so that Herbert could see a very high smart-looking gig awaiting her. He watched with a mixture of astonishment and amusement the dexterity with which she mounted it, drew a little packet from her pocket, lit a fragrant cigar, and taking the reins from the small groom’s hands, drove off down the road.

“ That’s Miss Highclere,” said Mrs. Jones, wiping her brow. “ You’ll see enough of her ; she’s always staying with my lady.”

“ Heaven help us ! ” muttered Herbert from behind his newspaper.

“ Yes, that you will ; it was all along of her this new idea of lady-helps — lady-helps indeed ! taking the bread out of folks’ mouths.”

“ Now, come, cook,” said the young gentleman ; “ I want to be left in peace.”

“ All right, footman ! I like you a-calling of me — cook,” she said, wrathfully ; but Mr. Herbert had tucked up his legs, settled his plaid round him, and was apparently in the land of Nod.

CHAPTER II.

IT was growing very dark, when Bertha discovered by a glance at her watch that they were due at Merton Junction. The two girls sat holding each other’s hands very tightly. A shrill whistle, slackening pace, and the train stopped. “ Merton Junction. All change here for Aberville, Charlton, and Dorchester.” And cold and shivering, the travellers bundled out into the raw November mist. The train, with its lights gleaming like crimson eyes, hurried off into the night, leaving four passengers standing a little disconsolately on the platform.

“ I wonder if anything has come to meet us,” said Amy, timidly.

“ There’s a bus here from Murch Hall, if any o’ you gents be going there,” said a friendly porter. Mrs. Jones pressed forwards, “ All right ! it’s come for me : here, take my bag, and just see the luggage in.”

The girls followed her through the station to the door.

“ Are you going to Murch Hall ? ” she asked, tossing her head superciliously.

"Yes, if you please; is there room?" said Bertha.

"Room! yes, there's room enough; plenty of room for you too, Mr. Herbert."

"Now, Mrs. Jones, look sharp," said the coachman, tightening the reins. "You'll come on the box and have a weed, won't you?" he said to Herbert.

"With all my heart."

The little omnibus bounded forwards, steadied itself, and spun along the road at a pace which made the three women hold on by the seats.

"Here we are!" said the coachman, throwing down the reins and jumping off. "Will you come with me, Mr. Herbert, and leave the women-folks to themselves?"

Fortunately a helper was ready to stand before the steaming horses, and another to open the omnibus-door and let out the tired travellers. They descended at a small low door, followed Mrs. Jones down a stone passage, and found themselves in a large stone-paved lower hall, out of which opened to the right and left the various very comfortable offices.

Here they were met by a tall old gentleman, somewhat bent by age, with a most kindly expression on his face as he came forward to meet the new arrivals.

"I hope you have done all your commissions, Mrs. Jones," he said.

"Yes, I have, sir, and a busy two days I have had; and I will not say but I shall be glad of my tea now, Colonel Clarence."

"And you must be tired, too," said he, very kindly, to the two girls. "I have ordered your tea at once, and told my lady that she had better not see you till you are a little rested."

"Oh, thank you."

"Colonel Clarence is always addressed as sir," said Mrs. Jones, sharply.

"I beg your pardon," faltered Bertha.

"No, no, come along now, and we will see how we can make you comfortable. Miss Gwendoline," he called out suddenly, "will you show these ladies their rooms?"

"*Sì, signore,*" said a voice; and out of the kitchen came a tall girl in a white apron and bib, with a most coquettish cap on her black hair; she put her hands into the little pockets of her apron and danced up to them.

"I hope you will like your rooms," she said, "and, above all, that you won't mind sharing one between you."

"Now don't you be a-putting of them up to—"

"The servants are waiting for you, Mrs. Jones," said Gwendoline, haughtily; and Mrs. Jones departed, wrathfully.

Their new acquaintance led the way up stairs that seemed to be endless—stairs that passed through a stone age, a wooden age, and finally an iron age—and landed our travellers, giddy from the tiny corkscrew ascent, in a sort of rabbit-warren of rooms under the roof.

"This is your room," said their guide, opening a door and showing them a large roomy garret with a sloping roof, two very inviting little white beds, and furniture of polished deal, which shone with rubbing. "And I hope you will be comfortable here; my room opens into it, and I shall come in and see you sometimes in bed. I am so glad you are come."

"We want so much to know what it will be like," said Bertha.

"I will tell you about the servants in half-a-dozen words. Colonel Clarence is the butler, and an old dear he is, always a refuge in times of direful trouble. The housekeeper is my lady herself, for no one else will undertake the job. The cook is Mrs. Jones, and Mrs. Jones is the thorn in the flesh of the establishment; Sir Joseph is philanthropic—Sir Joseph is likewise an epicure. Lady-helps are all very well, but no single lady-help can be found who can cook well. One gentleman-cook appeared, but he asked £500 a year, and could never make a plain pudding without champagne, so he was given up, and Mrs. Jones rules the roast. The kitchen-maids were always leaving till I came, and as I am determined with her, she respects me."

"I hope she will be kind to me," said Amy.

"I will see after you—we are two kitchen-maids, scullery-maid and pastry-maid; my underling is a nice merry schoolgirl, and we have great fun together. Now for you, Miss Fitzherbert—there are three housemaids and a head one; the head is Miss Price: she was once a governess, but failed, as she is such a fidget that no one would have her; she has nerves, and always thinks every one is going to offend her."

"Oh, dear!"

"The two other housemaids are sisters, the Miss Burdens, who took to service by their clergyman's advice, because they were always quarrelling."

"And then?"

"There is Miss Murch's maid, a real civil French lady's-maid who finds it very *triste* to have no companion. Lady Murch's maid is a retired officer's widow, who does nothing but cry—Mrs. Lurgan. Then there are the men. Captain Law-

rence, the coachman, who has only one leg; Mr. Fox and Mr. Herbert, two footmen; Colonel Clarence, butler; Arthur Macdown, Sir Joseph's valet; and a boy who wears yellow stockings—I suspect him of having been a blue-coat."

"Was it Mr. Herbert who came down from London with us?"

"Yes; we have never been able to find a footman to stay as yet, because Mr. Fox will not do a single thing, and the second footman does it all. I hope Mr. Herbert likes work."

They all laughed. "It is all very ridiculous, is it not?" said Gwendoline.

"Very; one does not quite realize it yet."

A comfortable tea was set in the room called the lady-helps' parlour when the two travellers came down-stairs. Colonel Clarence presided, pouring out tea as skilfully as a lady would have done, and supplying them liberally with bread and butter.

"Our regular tea-time is five o'clock," he said; "but I daresay you are just as well pleased to be too late to meet anybody to-night."

Tea over, he advised them to wash up the things, and said that he would now find out whether Lady Murch could receive them. Bertha went to look for hot water, and Amy flew up-stairs for some aprons, highly amused that their work should have begun at once.

They were hard at work with the cups and saucers when Colonel Clarence came back.

"My lady wishes to see you now," he said.

"Can't we just finish this?"

"Miss Gwendoline will do that. Miss Gwen!"

Gwendoline came flying down the passage.

"Can you finish these things, you wild child?" asked the colonel, patting her cheek.

"Oh yes, in a moment!" and pushing back her sleeves she put her hands immediately to their task.

Bertha and Amy felt very shy as they followed the butler up-stairs. The back staircase led out into a large dining-room, the table laid for about twenty people and blazing with lights; they crossed a couple of dark ante-rooms, went down a long corridor, and followed their guide into a large half-lighted drawing-room.

"Will you wait here?" he said, and vanished through another door. They waited about ten minutes, when the door

opened with a rush, and a young lady came in.

"How do you do?" she said cordially, and without shaking hands squatted down on the white fur mat in front of the fire.

"Mamma will be here directly. I am Mary Murch, and I hope we shall be great friends. I am always running in and out of the kitchen, in fact we all are, all day long, much to Mrs. Jones's disgust; but it is great fun."

"I should think it did not advance the work much," said Bertha.

"That is what mamma says; but all the same, if she will carry out these eccentric schemes of hers, she must experience the practical working of them."

"Are all the servants —?"

"Servants! ye powers, what an expression! There are no servants in this house; but it is so long to speak of the gentlemen-helps and the lady-helps distinctively, that they have been called among us the Troglodites—a most graceful and classical term. Here is mamma."

The door through which Colonel Clarence had gone was thrown open, and Lady Murch sailed in. It was dark, and the firelight flickered, but Bertha and Amy were aware of a stately presence tending towards six feet high, of yards of Bismarck-coloured silk, of *embonpoint* and shadowiness of outline in the twilight room, and of a deep masculine voice.

"I am glad to see you," she said; "I hope you have been welcomed and made as comfortable as circumstances permit in my abode."

"We have indeed."

"Be seated, and I will endeavour to put before you a few of the theories upon which the general management of this house is conducted." They sat down reluctantly, for Lady Murch's large presence stood looming before them, and she waved aside her daughter's offer of a chair.

"When I first followed the example of so many wiser and better than myself, and determined to select my household from the higher ranks, I began in a manner which it proved impossible to continue, by giving salaries such as gentlemen and gentlewomen might find it worth their while to accept. Sir Joseph rebelled; our fortune is large, but needs must be colossal to support such a tax, so I regret that I cannot offer much more than the ordinary rate of wa—of salaries."

"Forgive me," said Bertha, a little proudly; "but I am inexperienced; my

wages are to be those of an experienced housemaid. I cannot accept so much when my services are not worth it."

"Nor I," said Amy, eagerly.

"Nonsense," said Lady Murch. "You see that the advantage of having refined and agreeable gentlewomen more than makes up for the deficiency of experience."

"But I fear that it will not make better housemaids," said Bertha, smiling.

"That is my affair, and it is settled. Now to continue; at first my wish was that the Troglodites should have a table exactly similar to our own; but again"—and she waved her hand with a stately gesture—"again Sir Joseph rebelled,—in short, it proved too expensive; so I have been obliged to vary the Troglodites' table very little from what it used to be in the days of servants—excellent meat at all times, but not such little luxuries as soups, jellies, creams, sweet-breads, or *entrées*. As it is, I find the consumption of food so much less than it used to be, that that alone takes from the increase of expense of the new system. Then, again, tallow candles."

"Mamma," said Mary, entreatingly, "I am sure that these ladies will mind nothing."

"I hope they will be forbearing," said her mother, graciously. "I regret that I cannot see more of my lady-helps, but I am overpowered with business, being in the chair of so many public meetings and on several committees, besides having (perhaps foolishly) consented to write an article now and then in the *Eve's Magazine*. But there is no want of society, for all the guests staying in the house are as much in the kitchens and offices as in the drawing-rooms. Mrs. Lurgan and the Misses Burden dine with us to-night. To-morrow I hope you will both favour us with your company. I always make a point of inviting a few members of the household every night. Colonel Clarence dines to-night; I confess that always makes me a little anxious, for Mr. Fox is not a very good waiter, and Sir Joseph is very particular. Good night; and pray let me know if you have not everything you wish."

"Yes, I hope you will," said Mary, cordially, as Bertha and Amy left the room.

CHAPTER III.

"MR. STUART, will you take Miss Murch? Sir Frederick, allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Reid; Lady Snow-

don, an old friend of your husband's, Sir Frederick's college friend, Colonel Clarence; Mr. Reid, Mrs. Lurgan," etc.

The guests at Murch Hall passed two and two into the dining-room.

"I hope, my dear Lady Goodchild, that you have good news from Firton," said Sir Joseph, depositing a graceful lady in a chair at his side.

"Yes, thank you, Sir Joseph," simpered the lady; "a fine boy, and doing remarkably well. I said to George Lane, I had seldom seen my daughter, Mrs. Lane, look better; and it is such a good thing to have it over before the election. I feel quite nervous when I think of the flurry of her poor mind."

"She will be unable, of course, to canvass personally."

"I am sure so much the better; for she was sadly overtired the last election; and it is hard work, no doubt."

"Well, we wish her all success. We expect Miss Highclere to-morrow; she arrives by the 11.20 train, but will not leave till the poll is closed."

"Miss Highclere is invaluable. I really think that the county should present her with some testimonial if this seat is carried."

"Take down this fish at once, and tell Mrs. Jones that it is perfectly raw!" shouted Sir Joseph.

The head-footman lounged up. "It is the second time it has happened," he said.

"Tell her it must not happen again, Fox."

"All right!"

"Are you fortunate in your household, Lady Murch?" asked Lord Goodchild.

"Miss Burden, who is sitting next to you, will tell you that we are singularly happy."

"Some of the girls are very giddy," said Miss Burden, abruptly.

"It is a difficult team to drive," said his lordship.

"Team! yes; we have a capital coachman," said Lady Murch absently, for she was watching Fox, who, with a dish handed to Mrs. Reid, had remained for at least three minutes in that attitude listening to Sir Frederick's description of the day's run.

"I think young ladies are quite as difficult to manage as young maid-servants," continued Miss Burden—"they are so flighty; this very morning I had cause to complain of it."

At this moment Mr. Fox recollected himself, and moved his dish to another

lady, and Lady Murch, relieved, returned to her neighbour.

"The difficulties of such a household are very great, Lord Goodchild," she said; "and accustomed as I am to encounter difficulties, I have often felt nearly baffled."

"In what respect? I do not ask out of mere curiosity, for we are ourselves meditating fresh household arrangements."

"Well, to begin with — the difficulty of getting gentlemen-helps. Sir Joseph advertised for a coachman, a butler, and a head-footman: at the same time. We had no less than a hundred and fifty-eight applications for the coachman's place, one for the butler's place, and none at all for the footman's. The butler's place was filled by a cousin of my own, who is the comfort of my life," and she looked affectionately at Colonel Clarence, who was deep in a military discussion with Lady Snowdon. "The coachman was selected with great difficulty; the footman's situation was taken by one of the applicants for the coachman's place, who knows more about horses than waiting at table."

"No, no, Sir Frederick!" cried the head-footman suddenly. "You are quite mistaken; she's a capital mare! more going in her than in any in the stables. When Marmaduke came home from Ashton converts dead beat, Nancy had never turned a hair."

"So you all say, I know, Fox; but I never saw an uglier tumble than she gave young Tom."

"He does not know how to ride her, and —"

"Mr. Fox, will you kindly bring me some grouse?" said Lady Murch's deep voice.

"All right! I forgot. I beg your pardon. Wing or leg?"

"Leg. To continue, Lord Goodchild: one difficulty, of course, is the increase of salaries. It would not, of course, be expected that a lady-help should come to you for the same salary that a servant would; well, of course, they have to learn their work, and during that time extra assistance is absolutely necessary. You will be astonished to hear that at this moment I have sixteen charwomen in the house and five odd men."

"Indeed! Your accounts of difficulty would make me hesitate but for one thing — the enormous increase of wages demanded by servants. They say (and rightly) that they have far more knowledge of their duties, and are worth more than the lady-helps, and do not see why they should

be less well paid: it is the same with men-servants."

"This is again a difficulty: you cannot expect lady-helps to associate with any but gentleman-helps, and these are very difficult to get, being generally an odd set — disinherited sons, dismissed from universities, or wanting in intellect, or thoroughly idle. It is very hard to manage."

"It must be, indeed."

"Cooks have been the worst of all. My cook, Mrs. Jones, insists upon being called a lady-help, and gives herself great airs, though she is but a cook after all; and she makes herself very unpleasant to the young ladies, I am afraid."

"She does indeed," murmured Miss Burden.

At this moment the door burst open, and the coachman came in flourishing a letter in his hand.

"A telegram from Firton, Lady Murch!" he cried. "Miss Highclere wants me to go there at once; things are going very badly with Mrs. Lane."

"Badly!" almost shrieked Lady Goodchild. "The baby?"

"No, no, the election. Can I go, Sir Joseph? I have told Thomas that you can have the greys if you want them tomorrow; but I don't wish to have Castor or Pollux used; you can do as you like about the mare."

"Very well; you will drive over Miss Highclere to-morrow, will you, after the poll is closed?"

"Yes; I don't mind very much, as it will be dark; but I don't like being seen with her."

"Be off, then? Good-night;" and once more the dinner proceeded quietly.

A bright sunny morning followed a misty night, and when Bertha and Amy awoke from most refreshing slumbers, the panes of glass in their attic were rich with frost-pictures. Bertha could not avoid little shrieks as she plunged into her cold bath, and proceeded to make her toilet with cheeks as rosy as a child's. About eight o'clock the door opened, and some one with a pinched, sour-looking face looked in.

"I'm glad to see you're up, young ladies," said the owner of the face, in a voice which corresponded with her vinegar aspect. "Now, if you'll excuse me, Miss Fitzherbert, your bow is not straight; tie your apron behind, not in front. You, if you please, Miss Gordon, are to run down at once to Mrs. Jones. Now follow me, Miss Fitzherbert."

Bertha obeyed, only watching Amy a

little wistfully as she tripped off down-stairs.

"I suppose you know nothing about what you have undertaken?" said Miss Price, as the two together entered a long passage.

"I am afraid not very much."

"Well, this is the housemaid's closet; it has been fitted up as you see, by Lady Murch, to facilitate agreeable society for the lady-helps — here a sofa, there an arm-chair, behind that curtain a recess, a high chair to sit on while washing or rinsing at the sink; charwomen see to the slops, but we sluice ewers and basins with fresh water. Miss Murch, good-morning."

Miss Murch entered the housemaid's closet in her riding-habit. "Are you showing that poor child her duties before breakfast, Miss Price? Come, Bertha, (I may call you Bertha, may I not?) you had better come to breakfast first. I am going to breakfast with you, Miss Price, for Gwen and I are going to have a gallop before the 'company' make their appearance, when I shall elegantly nibble toast, decline ham, and sip tea, and be pitied by Mrs. Reid for my delicacy of constitution! Come along."

"Does your mamma approve of these unladylike doings, Miss Murch? — if so —"

"Never mind, come along! it is cold enough to make the very idea of breakfast delicious!" and she led the way down-stairs. The lady-helps' parlour was bright with a blazing fire, on which a kettle sang rapturously; the toast and the bread and butter looked most inviting; the coffee smelt so fragrantly that Mrs. Jones herself could not mar its sweetness, though with dirty poppies in her black cap she looked more vulgar than usual. Gwendoline was half-way through her breakfast, looking radiantly pretty in a dark-green riding-habit; only poor little Amy looked sad and spiritless.

"Miss Murch, I must beg," began Mrs. Jones, "that you will not repeat of taking out my kitchen-elps in this way; it leaves all the hard work to them as is too good for it."

"All right, Jones; give me some ham. Make haste, Gwen; I have not told you that we are to have a cavalier to-day."

"Cavalier! the new footman! and a saucy one he is — not so much the gentleman as we're accustomed to."

"Jones, give Miss Gwendoline the butter at once."

"Here, Gwendoline."

"I said *Miss Gwendoline*."

Mrs. Jones made no answer, but poured out some tea with a jerk.

"We must make haste with the rooms to-day, Eliza," said Miss Agatha Burden to her sister.

"There's no greater hurry than usual."

"Miss Price tells me Miss Highclere is to have the red room; and what with her litter, and smoking, and writing, we shall have our hands full."

"And the red-room dressing-room is to have the bed out and writing-things put in," said Miss Price; "and the walnut room is to be prepared for Mr. Leslie. We shall have the house quite full to-day."

Bertha started violently, but went on with her tea, hoping that no one noticed her rosy cheeks.

"I hear Mr. Leslie comes by the nine-o'clock train," said Miss Eliza. "So thoughtless! I shall scarcely have time to get my breakfast down; for I don't suppose you will be much help," she said, ungraciously, to Bertha.

"I will do my best," she said sweetly.

"Now, Gwen, if you have done."

"Quite done, thanks. Mind, Mrs. Jones, not too much fuss about the pastry at first. Miss Gordon is under my special protection."

And shaking her finger at her chief, Gwendoline followed her young mistress.

"You have not seen the new footman yet, have you?" asked Mary Murch, as they went out into the stable-yard.

"No, not yet. If he is no more amusing than his predecessor, I do not expect much from his acquaintance."

"He is to meet us at the lodge, as he is exercising Marmaduke, and is obliged to let off steam a little before riding with ladies."

"Captain Lawrence must have much confidence in him to let him exercise Marmaduke; why, Mr. Fox himself is never allowed to ride him."

"Oh, he knows what he is about; they are old friends. You know that Captain Lawrence is gone to Firton, so Thomas must mount us."

Another moment, and the two girls were cantering off to the lodge.

"How delicious it is in the early morning!" cried Gwendoline, as, putting their horses on to the grass, they turned across the park. The hoar-frost sparkled like diamonds on every blade, a clear blue mist was between them and the trees, at a little distance the water of the lake looked blue as the depth of the sky, and

two white swans swam haughtily to and fro, aware that their plumage actually dazzled the eye in the early gleams of the sun.

"Alas, that so soon all this sweetness and freshness should be exchanged for the hot kitchen and Mrs. Jones!"

"Don't think of it now; think of nothing but what is bright and joyous. There is the new footman."

"Where?"

Gwendoline shaded her eyes with her hand, and gazed in the direction pointed out; she started suddenly. "Mary, you have deceived me. I will not go."

"What do you mean? Do not turn back; he has not seen us."

"Let me go. I will not stay."

"What do you mean?"

"I will not go. Do you know who that gentleman is, or not?"

"Of course I do; it is Mr. Herbert, the new footman."

"It is Mr. Herbert Montgomery, a very different person; how dare he follow me here?"

"Oh, Gwen, what fun! Is he a suitor of yours?"

"Yes; how dare he?"

"You do not look as if you minded it much," said Mary, archly.

"But I refused him; he has no right to come bothering me like this. Leave my reins; I must go; see, he sees us."

"Then we must join him. Nonsense, Gwen; it is far more dignified."

"I will never forgive you," murmured Gwendoline, as the cavalier rode up.

CHAPTER IV.

"GOOD morning, Miss Murch. Ah!"

"Do not counterfeit surprise, Mr. Montgomery; it is not worth while."

"I vow——"

"Nor vow false vows. I am sorry to see you in such different circumstances. Mary, is it not nearly time to go in?"

"I cannot go in yet. This brute has been eating his head off in idleness, and wants a good gallop." As he spoke, whether by accident or design, Marmaduke reared violently.

"Take care, for heaven's sake! I hope he is not dangerous?"

"Oh no, Miss Murch; see, your friend has stronger nerves," he said, rather bitterly.

"I have seen you worse mounted."

"Ah, you mean Robin Hood!" he cried, eagerly. "Do you remember that day?"

"It must be time to go in, Mary," said

Gwendoline, impatiently. The new footman turned his back on the two girls, and rode off rather sulkily, Marmaduke quite quiet and subdued.

"He is going," said Gwendoline, in a low, anxious voice.

"Then call him back."

"I can't—I won't; but I wanted, really out of curiosity, to hear what has made him come down to this, for his sister's sake. Is he not a bear? He is always like that."

"Mr. Herbert!"

"Miss Murch."

"Miss Gwendoline wants to ask you a question."

"She must come and ask me in the pantry."

"You do not mean it?"

Gwendoline had touched her horse with the whip, and was speeding home—she would not stand that. In the pantry, indeed! She was quivering with indignation. Mary Murch was quite out of breath when she overtook her at the door.

In ten minutes Miss Murch, beautifully dressed, was sitting between Sir Frederick Snowdon and Mrs. Reid at the ten-o'clock breakfast; and Gwendoline, with her eyes still flashing, her cheeks flushed, and lips curling involuntarily into smiles, was hard at work with the vegetables for luncheon.

"I hate slops," said Miss Burden, querulously.

"Well, call the charwoman."

"I have called her twice, but she is with Miss Price."

"Make Miss Fitzherbert empty them."

"How cross of you! when you know she has as much as she can manage with that Miss Price always after her."

"Well, *please* don't grumble."

"I'm not grumbling; I only said I hated slops." And she walked off with the pail.

"Smoother, please, Miss Herbert, that crease will never do; now, tuck it in nicely. See, there is another crease! Stop a moment, child; that apron of yours will twist round. Now run to the sink and wash out the glasses, and then fill the water-bottles; mind you wipe them well with a clean duster. The dusters are kept in the right-hand middle drawer of—Oh, dear, how dusty that is! Give me the duster; never flick at a thing like that."

Bertha ran away to the housemaid's closet; she found Miss Burden wiping out a ewer and basin, and talking to Lady Goodchild, who sat with Mrs. Reid on the sofa. "Good morning," said the former, graciously, as Bertha made her pretty little

bow. Mrs. Reid stared at her superciliously. Bertha set to her work at once.

"Miss Fitzherbert, come here."

"Yes."

"When you have done, follow me to the red room with the brooms."

"Is that the new housemaid, Miss Burden?" asked Mrs. Reid.

"Yes; and a nice active girl she seems, though she knows nothing about her work; she has never been out before."

"Miss Price is rather severe, is she not?"

"I have nothing to do with Miss Price."

"Indeed! I thought you were second in the housemaids' department."

"We have no heads here, save nominal ones, Mrs. Reid; we choose our own work, and do it at our own time; we could not undertake these offices unless it were so."

"Ahem," said Lady Goodchild.

"Do you mean anything by that?" said Miss Burden, trembling nervously.

"Nothing at all; I am only making observations with a view to starting some such establishment myself," said Lady Goodchild. "Miss Murch, is that you?"

"Good morning, Miss Burden. Lady Goodchild, mamma is going to drive in the pony-carriage, and wants to know whether you prefer going out in the morning or in the afternoon."

"I will go with her now if she wishes it."

"Very well. Will you meet her in the kitchen in about a quarter of an hour? Mr. Stuart and Sir Frederick are there now; they are going with you."

"I will go and dress."

"What will you do, Mrs. Reid?"

"I shall not go out this morning; I will take my work and sit wherever you do."

"Lady Snowdon is in the drawing-room."

"She is a dull old woman; I don't care to sit with her."

"And after mamma is dressed, Mrs. Lurgan has promised to sing — she sings divinely."

"Why can't I come with you?"

"Oh, by all means! only you know I am such a flibber-gibbet."

"And where do you come from now, flibber-gibbet?"

"Oh, from down-stairs."

"What part of down-stairs?"

"The regions of the Troglodites."

"Which cave?"

"I was with Colonel Clarence."

"Oh, in the pantry?"

"Well, yes — I was."

"Let me come with you."

"Very well."

Ah non giunge
Uman pensiero!
Al' contento
Ond' io son piena!

sang the kitchen-maid at her work in the kitchen; she danced along with a pie-dish in her hands in the usual white apron and bib. Another voice took up the strain from the pantry — a rich tenor voice —

A miei sensi
Io credo appena
Tu m'affi-da!
O mio tesor!

The kitchen-door shut with a decided bang, and Gwendoline rushed to the fire.

"Stop! stop!" shouted Mrs. Jones. "Don't turn it, you awkward girl; baste it, or it will burn!"

A burst of laughter — Gwendoline turned round her rosy, defiant face.

"Mary, do go up-stairs. How can we do our work with all of you here? Here Sir Frederick has been insisting upon stoning the plums, and has eaten quite half."

"I protest —"

"Useless protestations!" cried Mrs. Reid, with would-be archness. "Please, Miss Gwendoline, if you have any materials, I should so like to make an omelet; I have not made one for years."

Mrs. Jones went on doggedly with her work.

"Instead of that would you whip these eggs for me? There — it is most artistic with a sharp flip and whisk."

"Oh, what fun! Can you lend me an apron?"

"Here — but please don't dirty it; it must last me till Saturday."

"Mayn't I shell peas?"

"No, Sir Frederick, not in November; but if you would copy out this receipt for me, I should be very much obliged."

"I see neither pen, ink, nor paper."

"They are all in the pantry."

"Here is Lady Murch!" cried Gwendoline.

"Good morning, my dear. Has Lady Goodchild come down yet?"

"No, not yet; but she went to dress ten minutes ago."

"If she comes in, Gwendoline, ask her to be so kind as to wait a few moments for me, for I must speak to poor young Herbert for a few moments."

"Is anything the matter, mamma?" asked Mary, demurely.

"No, nothing the matter; but one likes to be kind to any one so unfortunate; it is a sad case of broken fortunes without any culpability on the part of the victim—one of those cases one often reads of, but seldom meets—a most exemplary young man."

"Who told you about him, mamma?"

"Captain Lawrence, an old school-fellow of his. Don't forget my message, girls. Gwendoline, remember you must have a walk to-day; you look flushed."

At this moment Amy came timidly into the kitchen.

"Good morning," said Lady Murch; "I hope you are getting on well, my dear."

"Oh, may I show you my tartlets, Lady Murch? I should so like to do so."

"Do; I should like to see them very much."

Amy eagerly led the way into the still-room.

"Look," she said, gleefully. Lady Murch had a good eye for design. "What a pretty design!" she exclaimed; "I must have it for my flower-beds. Where did you get it?"

"From Villemin. It is a very good one, is it not? Only I should have liked two or three coloured jams; but Mrs. Jones would not let me—she said it was extravagant."

"Well, leave them as they are, and I will send Mr. Fox to sketch off the design quickly, as I daresay you have not time."

"Oh, thank you. I have a good deal to do: there is the paste for the dumplings to be made."

Lady Murch swept out, and Amy went on with her work.

"Miss Gordon!" shouted Mrs. Jones—that lady's voice was never less than a shout.

"Those tartlets must be baked, or they'll never be ready for luncheon."

"I am so sorry, but Lady Murch is going to send in Mr. Fox to sketch them, so they must wait."

"But I tell you they must be done at once."

"I will run and ask Mr. Fox to be quick." Amy sped away to the pantry.

"Oh, please, Mr. Fox," she said, "would you mind sketching the design before it is baked?"

"Oh, ah! I forgot; Lady Murch said something about it. Ring the bell, Herbert. Thanks. When the odd fellow comes tell him to finish cleaning those lamps, etc. I ain't coming back."

"By Jove, that is pretty!" he said, on

beholding the result of Amy's labours; "it inspires me." He drew out of a drawer all manner of drawing-materials, and began making designs.

Amy came to Miss Murch with a very troubled face.

"Please, I beg your pardon; but Mr. Fox was going to draw my tartlets, and instead he is making all kinds of designs, and I do so want to begin to bake them."

"What do you want me to do, my dear?"

"Please get him to leave off, and sketch them quickly; he will attend to you."

"Have you found that out already?" and Mary laughed to herself as she disappeared into the stillroom.

"Are those eggs ready, Mrs. Reid?" asked Gwendoline, with her white little hands kneading away in a basin.

"What eggs?"

"The white you were whisking. I can't wait a moment. Oh, please whisk it quicker, or my pudding will be spoilt. Oh, quick, quick! What have you been doing?"

"I got absorbed in the cookery-book, and forgot it. Shall I be in time?"

"Go on, go on!"

"But my hand aches so!"

"Only a minute more! there, pour it in—that's right. Now the sauce-pan—all together."

"Evviva! It is on the fire! 'Saved! saved! saved!' as Tennyson hath it."

"Only just in time," said Mrs. Reid, panting. "I don't know when I have been so flurried."

His passion is evidently the greatness of his country. He attaches no great value either to honors, or wealth, or pleasures. But he is hard, and pays little heed to the lives of men. War has no horror to him. The German of the primitive time survives in him; or, rather, he appears among us like the god Thor of the Scandinavian Olympus, bearing in his hand his iron hammer, and unchaining the tempests.

EMILE DE LAVELEYE.

A DOUBTING HEART.

BY MISS KEARY,
AUTHOR OF "CASTLE DALY," "OLDBURY," ETC.

CHAPTER XV.

(continued.)

"WHAT was the foolish lad so pleased about? What nonsense was he getting into his head now?"

The clock struck again before either spoke, and then it was Dr. Urquhart who started, for he thought it was about five minutes since he shook hands with Emmie, and had not the least conception that his mother had been looking at him disapprovingly for exactly half an hour. He even lighted and brought her bedroom candle, and stooped to give her the never-omitted good-night kiss, before he perceived the disquiet in her face, and became aware that there was something wrong.

"Mother!" he exclaimed. For a minute they stood looking at each other; and Mrs. Urquhart, though she would not withdraw her eyes from his, felt as if the Land of Beulah was crumbling round her. "Are you really very angry with me for interrupting your talk with Miss West just now?" he asked. "Have not I a right to my share of talk with her as well as you?"

"It was very ill-judged, Graham," Mrs. Urquhart began, quite relieved that the opportunity of speaking her mind had come so soon. "It does not signify what an old woman like myself says to a girl; but when you strike in you make it serious. If you did but know how you looked when you came stalking down upon us from the inner room!"

"I looked very ridiculous, I dare say; one generally does when one is very much in earnest; but, mother, you are generally so quick at guessing. Don't you understand why I could not bear to hear you

put such a notion into her head? She is such a child; she has no thought yet but for her own people and her own home. I am letting her go without a word, trusting to her coming back as simple-hearted as she went, and I hear you calmly suggesting a possibility I have not allowed myself to think of — that I could not bear!"

"Graham! — and you say yourself that 'she is a mere child.'"

"The dearest — the loveliest — the most perfect in the world. My wife and your daughter in the years to come — please God, mother — if only we have her safe back again."

Dr. Urquhart was not really a vain man, only a little over-hopeful, as early successful people are apt to be, and it did not occur to him that a simple little childish heart like this, might be the one good thing in the world — the one prize, that, for all his other triumphs, was beyond his winning. He did not think of that, and having spoken those two fateful words so sacred to him, he drew up his head, winking a little moisture perhaps from his eyes, but proud and smiling.

Mrs. Urquhart sank down into her chair quite overwhelmed. She had fancied she wished her son to fall in love and marry. She had even been planning magnanimously for Katharine Moore, at some quite distant date — a sensible, reliable, not too beautiful young woman. Mrs. Urquhart was of Mr. Caxton's opinion as to the middling style of beauty desirable in one's son's wife — she could, she thought, have put up with that. But a child with a pink and white face like Emmie West; an impulsive kittenish young thing, who came to her room, not two days ago, to borrow a thimble, confessing that her own had been missing for a fortnight — to give up the mending of her son's linen, and the first place in his affection, to such charge as that, and not at a vaguely distant day either! Old as she was, Mrs. Urquhart had too vivid a recollection of scenes following on her Edinburgh journey to be in doubt, when signs of the real true feeling were before her eyes. Yes, yes. Love, with all his youthful unrest, and all his jealous pangs and cloudy distractions, had come to-night into the Land of Beulah — but was it the Land of Beulah any longer, or only a hilly part of the journey where Apollyon had to be met and conquered once more? Mrs. Urquhart pressed her hands hard down on the arms of her chair, and turned her head away. She was naturally a warm-tempered, jealous-hearted woman, and had had hard struggles with

herself in past times. But she was used to victory. In five minutes it was all over. Apollyon had put his dart back again into the sheath, and spread his broad wings for flight, worsted for the last time, and sweet breaths from the heavenly hills were blowing tranquillity and peace about her old heart again. Was not her own love waiting for her there, beyond the river? and could she be so base as to grudge this good son a free choice of his?

"Dear little Emmie West!" she said softly. "How I wish I had given her a second kiss to-night—a mother's kiss! Well, we will both be in the way to see her to-morrow morning, before she leaves the house, and whenever the time comes, as of course it will come, as soon as we have her here again, and you bring her to me for my blessing, there will be a warm welcome ready for her. She's too good a daughter not to make a good wife for you, my son, and though she did not of course intend it, she showed plainly enough to-night which way her inclination was going."

"You think so really, mother? You make me very happy."

And when Mrs. Urquhart, afraid of a relapse if she were obliged to listen to any further raptures this evening, stretched out her hand for her bed-candle, she received the most affectionate embrace from her son she had had since the night of her widowhood—when he put his boyish arms round her and offered her the devotion of his young life to make up for her desolation. Of course she had known all along that the hour of her dethronement would come, she would have been quite miserable if it had never come, and now that it was here a little soon, she felt that the one thing to be done was to strip herself of every valued possession still her own, and cast all at the feet of her supplanter. What had she good enough to offer to Emmie West—to the person who had won her son's heart from her?

As she felt too much excited when she got into her own room to prepare for rest at once, she seated herself before her dressing-table and began an elaborate inspection of old treasures, to discover something that might be sacrificed to her rival to-morrow. Should it be the wonderful cairngorm brooch that Graham had bought for her after their first separation with the savings of his school allowance? or the solid gold pencil-case that represented his first fee? or that dearer treasure yet, the old-fashioned locket in which her husband had put the first baby lock of hair? No, that must be a later gift. It

was dedicated to-night, but reserved for the bridal morning. The cairngorm brooch should be offered first. And then Mrs. Urquhart put on her strongest spectacles and wrote a neat little note to be slipped with the brooch into Emmie's hand next morning; wondering, as she laboriously picked her phrases to make them cordial enough, that a disciplined heart should have such clinging roots round earthly possessions still, and yield the first place so grudgingly.

If her ears had been quick enough, or if she could have seen through the ceiling of her room on to the balcony of the story above, her sense of loneliness would have been lessened, for she would have discovered that another heart in that house to-night was going through the self-same struggle. A novice learning her first lesson out of the great book of sacrifice in which women graduate for heaven, instead of a veteran spelling out the finis to which she had arrived.

Mildie was the fellow-sufferer. The evening had been a very trying one for her. All the boys—including Harry—had been out of spirits, and consequently captious with her tea-making, and after tea came an order from Mr. West for a general turn-out of the common stock of schoolbooks, that the most available specimens might be set aside for Aubrey to take to school with him. Harry presided over the business, but of course Mildie could not keep herself from hovering near her treasures, and smarting under a keen sense of injustice as she heard one after another of her favorites disposed of without any reference to her claims on them. Mildie's Euclid was it? bought with her own money? Well, it was the only decent one among the lot. She must give it up, and be content with Casa's old one. What could it matter to her if the second half of the third book was torn out? She would never get anything like so far with no one to help her. The Latin dictionary that had lost all its D's and its L's, might stay on the schoolroom shelf. The Gentle Lamb was going to leave off Latin and sink to the commercial school after Easter, and as for Mildie, she was only learning for her own amusement. It could not signify if she had to guess all the words beginning with D or L for the rest of her life. A girl's Latin translations were sure to be rum enough, Casa opined, whatever sort of dictionary she used.

To wind up the insults and injuries of the evening, Mildie was requested, quite good-naturedly, for no one had noticed her

sufferings, to write Aubrey's name and address legibly in the first page of each of these books — her books that she had valued and used so much more diligently, and to so much better purpose than anybody else in the house — and then to take them and put them away in his room to be packed in his new school-box to-morrow. She did it, mentally comparing herself to a Carthaginian mother dropping her children through the hands of Moloch; but on leaving Casa's attic, she felt she could not go down-stairs again to look at the ravished bookshelves and be badgered by the boys for her red eyes. What remotest corner of the house should she rush to, to have a good cry and ease her angry heart? Members of large families in crowded houses find the luxury of grief as difficult of attainment sometimes as other luxuries generally supposed to be more costly. Mildie could think of only one spot where she could secure five minutes' solitude and freedom to look as she liked and sob as loudly as she pleased without provoking criticism.

This spot was rather a summer's than a winter's retreat — a certain level bit of the leads at the back of the house, to which there was access by a little door in one of the attic rooms. The night was cold and there was snow on the roof, but what did that matter? Mildie threw a shawl over her head, pushed the little door hard, and emerged among a forest of chimney-pots. She soon made her way among them to the spot she had in her mind, and then stood still. The novelty of the scene in its winter aspect drew her thoughts from herself at first, and checked the tears she had come to shed. Far below were the gas-lights stretching up and down the narrow back street, and a file of men and women drudging past them through the black siush to which the morning's snow had been trampled; but around her still lay patches of dazzling white mixed with red gables and yawning black chimneys, and over all stretched a sky of thin cloud, silvered in one spot with frosty moonlight. Dictionaries and Euclids did not look so all-important here in this wide white-and-black world as they had looked in the schoolroom below, but Mildie was not disposed to let go her hold on her grievance so easily. Hers was not a romantic sorrow, like that of a young girl wounded in her first secret love, but perhaps she felt quite as forlorn and sore-hearted as any lovesick maiden, and she had come up here to have it out with herself.

It was hard, yes, it was hard — and no

one saw the hardship. She was the only person in the family who cared for study, and she was robbed of her opportunities and turned into a drudge without any one so much as acknowledging that it was a sacrifice. Her life was taken up and folded away in the dark that other people might do as they pleased with theirs. Alma marry a rich man, and Emmie travel abroad with Aunt Rivers, and Casa enjoy privileges he would make nothing of — and all the time Mildie had thoughts and ambitions in that rough head of hers such as would never come to any of them. She knew it well enough, though she knew also that she should be laughed utterly to scorn by every one if she were even to hint at anything of the kind. Oh, it did seem hard! and now the tears came in a plentiful rain, and Mildie crossed her arms on the wet parapet, quite heedless of damage to the shawl in which she had folded them, and laid her face down and sobbed out her moan. Stormy, heart-shaking sobs at first, dying down into gentler heaving of her breast against the grimy wet parapet she had chosen to weep upon.

"Hush! hush!"

The sound seemed to come out of the air and dropped into Mildie's ears, half soothingly, half remonstratingly, in rough, but loving tones.

"Hush, then, hush!"

She raised her head and looked over the parapet. The words were being spoken down there. A woman was leaning against the railings of an area below, resting for a moment while she tried to readjust her burden, a wailing child, so as to give it a warmer fold of a ragged shawl in which her half-naked bosom and it were wrapped together.

"Hush, dear, hush!"

It was a softer whisper now, soft, almost satisfied, for the child's cries were stilled, and Mildie, from her station above, saw the mother pull herself upright and set out on her way again, staggering and swaying under her load from weakness and weariness, but plodding on and on down the dim street, through ice and mire, till darkness and distance swallowed her up.

How long had she been carrying that baby, and how far? — Mildie vaguely wondered. How her arms must ache, and yet how closely they clasped their burden round!

There was something more in Mildie after all than the pert, pedantic schoolgirl she appeared to outsiders. She could understand other things besides languages

and mathematics, and get glimpses, sometimes in irregular ways, into matters that her studies did not touch at all. She could not have explained to Casabianca why that woman's "Hush!" and the sight of her burdened figure plodding on down the comfortless street, took all the anger and pain out of her heart, and suddenly elevated household drudgery far above learning, into a kind of glorious martyrdom indeed, which had no shade of bitterness in it: yet such was the effect it had on her. She no longer felt injured or solitary — there were other burden-bearers, more than enough. Was one a woman for anything else? Mildie saw it all in a flash of lightning; and something else too loomed up vague and grand in her thoughts to be pondered over till it grew clear in after years. The woman-born, who called himself the chief bearer of burdens, was it not in virtue of nearness to him that the call to bear burdens for others, unthanked and unnoticed, came so often to women? Was there anything really greater? Was it not being called to sit in the highest room, nearest to the Giver of the feast?

Mrs. Urquhart would have been content with her fellow-struggler's progress in her first lesson, if she could have read the thoughts that busied Mildie's brain as she crept back through the low door into the house again, and set herself to wash the grimy marks from her shawl at the sink in the housemaid's closet. It was cold there, but Emmie and her mother were still talking in the bedroom, and Mildie resolved not to disturb them by bringing her own uncomfortable self into their presence before it was necessary.

When she crept into the room at last, all was quiet, and Emmie was kneeling by her bedside, lingering a little longer than usual, this last night, over her evening prayers. For the last week or so, since a certain conversation with Alma, Emmie had added a clause to her petitions for relations and friends which had Alma's name in it, a prayer hardly worded but breathed low — that when the time came Alma might be led to make somebody happy — or rather kept from giving him such pain as Emmie knew of. To-night she paused over the words, for she remembered suddenly that it was too late to frame such a petition now. It was all over, and Alma had put it out of her power to give joy or pain to that person more. There was, as he had phrased it himself, "nothing more to be said." The recollection brought Emmie's prayers to a hasty conclusion. She jumped up and hurried

to bed, for she was conscious that a great throb had come to her heart with that certainty, a throb of triumph, not of pain, and it frightened her to find such a feeling had come for such a cause.

CHAPTER XVI.

S N O W D R O P S.

To enjoy a walk through Kensington Gardens as Christabel Moore enjoyed hers one soft February afternoon a week after Emmie left England, one must have lived for a year at least in a close quarter of London; one must have had a good deal of anxious hard work to do there, and perhaps, added to this, one must be young, and an artist, and a dreamer with an untroubled heart, like Christabel.

One thing is certain that the touch of the sun-warmed wind on her cheek, and the fresh, growing smell from the borders, and the tremulous quiver of life in the slender branch-tips against the sky, transported Christabel into a world of rapture where not many people could have followed her. Katharine could not, she would have enjoyed a leisurely walk beneath the budding trees, and noted all the tokens of reviving vegetation more minutely perhaps than Christabel, but she would have seen a good many other things too that would somewhat have spoiled the spring poetry for her. The pinched, pale faces of the group of children, hunting among that heap of dead leaves for a possible last year's chestnut, — the staggering gait of the man who has just left the seat by the pond and wandered away among the trees, — the hunchbacked figure crutching itself slowly down the broad walk.

The human side of the picture would have been too prominent with Katharine, to permit her to revel in the natural beauty, but Christabel was endowed with the fairy gift of seeing everywhere just what she chose to see, one aspect of things at a time, and that so intently as to shut out all else, even herself, from her thoughts.

To-day, she was not merely in Kensington Gardens, she was walking through a bridal chamber, and seeing the newly-awakened earth deck herself in the fairest of her many robes to receive her bridegroom's greeting kiss — that vesture of faintest, tenderest green, which in England nature puts on for a day or two at the opening of the year and lays aside in tears, never to be resumed again, when her bridegroom Summer disappoints her and delays his coming. No touch of the evanescent glory was lost on Christabel;

her eyes greedily drank in all the delicate coloring, the pale sunshine, the pearly-grey shadows, the misty haze of green in which the black branches of the distant trees seemed to be bathed, the touches of autumn russet lingering here and there, the lovely tints of the clouds reflected in the water. As she looked, her pulse quickened with a vague expectation and hope of coming joy, as if she herself had become a portion of the new activity she felt stirring in all things around her.

It never occurred to her that passers-by might stare to see her stand motionless so long peering down at the common wonder of an open-eyed daisy in the grass. And as she followed with rapture in her eyes the heavy flight of a rook over the roof of Kensington Palace, bearing a twig for the repair of its nest in the venerable rookery behind Holland House, she did not hear the remark, "How strange!" which two ladies who had left their carriage at the gate, and were taking a turn down the broad walk, exchanged as they passed her, their long trains almost touching her dusty feet. They even glanced back, when they had walked some distance, to ascertain if she was still standing gazing up at the clouds, so strangely had the intense joy in her small, pale face struck them, and so unaccountable did it appear to them, that a grown-up person should take such an absorbed interest in the flight of a bird. A shabby person too, whose brown dress — though it was brightened with scarlet ribbons — was made of the commonest materials, and of a style that had not come out of any fashion-book. What reason could she have to be happy because the rooks were building their nests again and spring was coming? Spring could not mean a gay London season for her!

Christabel's soul had followed the rook to its wind-rocked ancestral castle, and wished it success in its building by the time these observers had done puzzling themselves about her, and then she turned off the walk among the trees, ready for the next pleasure the spring afternoon had to give her. She had a full hour for enjoyment, for a lesson she had come into that part of London to give had been interrupted at its commencement, and as Katharine would not expect her home till the usual time, she could spend the interval in walking about as she pleased. The feel of the grass under her feet carried her thoughts back to other springs, and visions rose of green valleys starred with primroses running up between the velvety or wooded sides of Lancashire hills, but she

did not regret them, they were as much hers here as there, for they were a part of the spring in which she was rejoicing.

The sunshine and the west wind were telling her of the growth of flowers somewhere, and that was enough — nay, did not the air even seem to bring her a faint, faint suggestion of the delicate odor of spring flowers? This became so real, that it woke her from her reverie at last, and forced her to notice where she had wandered. She was standing close to the gardener's cottage, near Queen's Gate, and the flowers she had been dreaming about were at her feet — not mountain primroses indeed, but something that for the moment did quite as well for Christabel — a border fenced in, but open to sight, of early snow-drops, with here and there a crocus bud breaking like a flake of fire among their snow.

The discovery so delighted her that she turned round involuntarily to look for Katharine to share her joy, and her eyes fell on a little child lying asleep close to the railings, through which he had pushed the fingers of one hand. He had crept away from a group of larger children at play by the pond, tempted by the flowers, and fallen asleep weary with his efforts to reach them.

Christabel stooped down to look at the little white face, and one of those quick impulses that broke in upon her dreamy moods seized her. Poor little human bud that had so much less promise in its opening than the brother flower-buds it had stretched after in vain, what could she do to bring a little touch of spring-tide pleasure near it?

She had some biscuit in her bag which she had forgotten to eat at luncheon time, and the notion of slipping them into the thin hand that lay stretched out sleepily on the grass, and then stealing out of sight, leaving the little one to open its eyes on the gift without any clue from whence it came, just pleased her fancy. The sleepy fingers clutched the food with the instinct of hunger, and Christabel, stooping down, drew the corner of the child's ragged frock over his hand to hide what it held from any covetous passer-by. Then she stood watching till the eyelids that had half opened at her touch closed comfortably, and the even breathing of baby sleep came again.

She was just thinking of moving away, when a voice close behind her said, —

"Good afternoon, Miss Moore; is it one of our old friends you have got there, or a 'babe in the wood' that you are cov-

ering with leaves? May another robin come and help?"

She turned at the sound of the voice, and her hand was taken and eagerly clasped in another, and she was conscious of a look of extreme pleasure in two handsome grey eyes which met and held hers a second or two before she could think of any word to say in answer.

It was not exactly surprise at the meeting that kept her silent — she had always thought she should meet "Fortunatus" (as she called him in her thoughts) again sometime — it was rather the wonder that comes when an event falls out so exactly as it has been imagined that it seems a result, or an echo of the thought. If she had spoken out the first words that came to her, she would have said, "So you are really here to-day. I felt as if you ought to come on such a day as this, and you are here."

Luckily, words always lagged very far behind thoughts with her, and her companion was in no hurry for her to speak ; he was quite satisfied with what her eyes and the delicate rose-flush that spread over her face said as they stood together in the spring sunshine. Even when the greetings were ended, and they were walking side by side, the conversation flowed slowly at first, and they did not for a few minutes look at each other again. Each seemed to be afraid of disturbing the impression of that involuntary meeting gaze which had made questions and answers, greetings and assurances of pleasure in each other's company, so ridiculously poor and unnecessary.

Lord Anstice spoke first.

"Well, I shall always know where to find you for the future. I shall look out for the most miserable, starved, ragged child in London, and stick close to him ; and by-and-by you'll appear to give him a surprise."

"I did not know I was such a difficult person to find," said Christabel shyly.

"You are, however ; I have called three times in Saville Street since I got back to London, and each time you were out ; and on the last occasion I had the door almost slammed in my face by an old dragon who muttered something about lodgers' visitors. After that I invaded your old watchmaker's shop, and tried to pump him about your times and seasons of going out and being at home ; but not a word could I drag out of him, though I hung about his place over an hour, and would have bought a chronometer if he would have let me."

"How odd of David ! but you quite mis-

took the way to his heart if you showed even a distant intention of carrying off one of his three chronometers. A reasonable silver hunting-watch he might have sold you with pleasure, if he thought you capable of taking care of it, and that you could rightly afford to pay for it ; but one of his chronometers that he has been working at half his lifetime, it would take a long and intimate acquaintance for David to trust you with that, and," — glancing up timidly, but yet with a mischievous gleam in her eyes — "I doubt whether you are exactly the sort of person ever to merit such a mark of confidence from him."

"Why not? Why should not he trust me?"

"The story of Fortunatus's purse would tell terribly against you with David. He is a Scotchman, and a political economist as well, and I have often wondered what he would say to our indiscriminate giving that night. Do you know I have even been a little bit afraid myself that it was wrong — to you — I hope —"

Christabel hesitated ; and then, looking up into Fortunatus's face, while the color rushed over her own, she said earnestly, —

"I have often thought about it, and hoped that my recklessness that night did not really inconvenience you — that it has been made up to you some way. Will you tell me if the engagement — the work that has kept you away from London all this time, has proved as profitable as I hope it has, and more than made amends for your generosity?"

Her eyes fell from his face as she spoke, and wandered over his person as if half afraid of detecting some sign of privation ; and he turned a little away, coloring almost as vividly as she had done.

"Work! oh it did not make any difference to me ! But, Miss Christabel," in a pleased tone, "it was immensely jolly of you to trouble your head as much as all that about me. Nobody else does. You have really been afraid I should miss that money?"

"You must forgive me if I have made a mistake ; you see I have not at present any very grand notions of an artist's earnings. My own are not so magnificent as to warrant recklessness, and though I am beginning to have a few friends in my own profession, I don't get much encouragement from their experience. We none of us can boast of rapid success ; and did you not tell me you were only a beginner ?"

"Only a beginner, as you say ; but — these friends of yours" (in a tone of discontent) "you said *we*."

"Why should not I have friends? I am not the only girl in London working at art."

"Oh yes, I see, lady friends. Well, I don't fall in with men friends so easily. I have always been a surly-tempered, lonely sort of fellow—since I can remember myself, best pleased with my own company. When I was little my mother shut me up, and made a misanthrope of me by way of keeping me out of temptation, and when I came to be my own master, though I broke loose at first, and saw something of the world, the instinct to get back into my shell and follow out my crotchets alone soon came back. I don't like half the world to know what I'm doing. My notion of happiness is to get out of the crowd and feel free, with plenty of space to do what I like, and be what I like, without any one troubling his or her head about me. I fancy that must be your taste too."

"I am not over six feet high," said Christabel, peeping up at her companion's towering head, and not being able to keep a gleam of the admiration she felt from stealing under her thick eyelashes. "There is no need for me to pine for solitudes. I can creep about low down in a crowd without anybody seeing me."

"I saw you, though. The two millions of people in London could not hide you from me. I found you out. I shall always feel grateful to a crowd for that."

There was a moment's silence, and then Christabel said, with that fine smile of hers, just touched with sarcasm, "Does nothing short of an accident in a crowd force a friend upon you? I should not have given you credit for such resolute reserve, from what I have seen of you."

"What! Because I have talked of myself to you, and, as you think, told you so much about my private concerns? You'll understand the ins and outs of my oddities better some day, and meanwhile I can tell you that it takes a great deal more than an accident in a crowd to make me speak out. It takes *you*—nothing in the world less than that would do it—and besides I had seen you before the accident, and made up my mind in a minute to see you again if I could."

"You would have found it very hard," said Christabel. "I am a will-o'-the-wisp even to myself, and I don't think I am always to be seen at the place where my body is, if you can understand such a thing. I can walk about and talk very fairly well, to most people, without being *there* at all. I have been doing it all this afternoon, till first the flowers and then

you brought the two halves of me together."

"Did I not know that as well as you can tell it me? I was watching you for half an hour before I spoke to you, waiting for you to come back. I shall never mind waiting till you are ready to talk; it interests me; and I say, now we have met a second time, we are not going to lose sight of each other for two months again. Are we?"

"I don't know," said Christabel hesitatingly; "we are very busy people, Katharine and I, and we have not much time to give to our friends. I am afraid—I mean I think—it must be on rare days, Christmas eves, spring days in the middle of winter like this, that we look for meetings. That is how I think it will be."

"I don't think so. That would not satisfy me. It might suit you well enough, who have lots of friends, all those people you called *we*, but you forget how lonely I am. You will see me a great deal oftener than that now I have come back to London."

"Are you really quite as lonely as you say?" asked Christabel, smiling. "You talk of my friends, but there is your cousin, whom all my little Saville Street world are enthusiastic in praising, whom even the magnificent Miss Alma Rivers is said to regard with favor. We have no such hero among our acquaintance, to give us consequence and stand by us in our troubles."

"Wynyard! so people praise him to *you*, do they? Spare me the repetition. He has been thrust upon me all my life by one person or another, and there are reasons why I have always more or less of an uncomfortable feeling when I am with him. I don't mean but that he is a thoroughly good fellow, and I've no doubt I should, as you suggest, take my troubles to him; but for pleasure give me a companion that no one has recommended to me. Why not you and your sister? Why should not you help me through some of my lonely evenings? Why should not you give lessons to me, as well as to your old watchmaker?"

"You would soon find old David a very contentious fellow-pupil, and would tire of sitting among his clocks, listening to his bad French and queer philosophy."

"I did not mean that. I meant why should I not come to Saville Street on the evenings when you are at home, and have a lesson—say in drawing? There must be lots of things that you could teach me, for I have never found any one from whom I could learn anything worth learning yet."

"You ought to be able to draw a great deal better than I do to call yourself an artist at all — but —"

"You will let me come?"

"I will ask Katharine. It is not our own house, you know; we pay a very small rent for our attic rooms, and we don't feel that we have a right to bring many visitors, much less a regular pupil to the house — and besides — we think a great deal of ourselves, it is true, but hardly so much as to induce us to undertake you for a scholar."

"It must be managed somehow; we will never be so long again — two months without seeing each other."

Christabel's smiling eyes fell under the look that went with these words, and they sauntered on under the trees in another pleasant, spell-bound silence, that lasted for many minutes without either finding it awkward. It seemed a waste of time to talk, while the sunshine fell so softly round them, and the certainty of content in each other's presence had stolen into their hearts, making them tremblingly afraid of perilling their new joy by words that were sure to be less true than the thoughts which seemed to pass unexpressed between them. It might have been an hour, and it might have been five, for any account of time they took, when Christabel found herself close to the gate by which she was accustomed to leave the gardens on her way to Saville Street, and noticed how long their shadows lay on the gravel walk.

"I must make haste home," she exclaimed, "Katharine will be there before me, and I don't like that to happen; for since her accident she has taken to being nervous for me, though never for herself."

"But home is a long way off, and I am going to call on your sister; our walk does not end here."

"I am afraid it must. I shall ride home in that red omnibus you see standing there, and I don't think Katharine would like me to bring a visitor, not even a new pupil, home to-night. She is not quite strong yet, and she will have had an anxious day. She was to see a friend this afternoon who has undertaken to give her information and advice about the next steps she is to take in following out her medical studies. She fears she has come to an end of the little she can do in England, and the decision she will have heard to-day is all-important to us, and will need a great deal of talking over, and perhaps the forming of new plans."

"Not anything that will take you away from London, I hope. Do you know once or twice while I was in Scotland such a horror came over me with the thought that I might never find you again, that I could hardly keep myself from rushing off by the next train to make sure that those wonderful attics and yourself were in the land of reality where I could get at you! You won't vanish away suddenly now that I have found you again?"

"What makes you think of such a thing? I shall go wherever Katharine has to go, of course; but our changes can't be sudden; we could not give up our pupils and our work at once, too much depends on them, as I should think you would know."

"It would be too hard on me, if when, for the first time in my life, I have found friends to my mind they should be whisked away before I have got any good out of them. Shall you be passing through the gardens at the same hour next week? Since Saville Street seems to be an almost impregnable fortress, I must look out for you here. I shall be sure to meet you here, at all events."

"Yes, at all events," said Christabel, disengaging her hand from the farewell clasp which threatened to be too long. She did not feel quite satisfied with herself when she was in the omnibus on her way back to Katharine, and was able to think quietly over what she had said and looked and felt. She wished, since she could not deny to herself that this unexpected meeting was a great event to her, that she had accepted Fortunatus's offer of companionship home, and given Katharine an opportunity of seeing and understanding once for all the terms of close acquaintanceship into which they two had unaccountably stumbled. She regretted for the hundredth time that small concealment on Christmas eve, which had made her, so she thought, shy of speaking her artist friend's name to Katharine, and induced her to hide away, as she had never before hidden thought or feeling from Katharine, the recollections that had been often in her mind, the oftener, perhaps, because she had never spoken them. How could she begin now, and how would Katharine bear the revelation of an interest absorbing her, in whose beginnings she had had no part? Was it really true that such a thing had happened as that she had a separate interest from Katharine? Christabel tried for a time to argue the unwelcome conviction away, but ended by only wishing vehemently that she could feel as free from any personal con-

cern in the discussion of future plans that was to take place this evening, as she had felt when she set forth on her day's work. There was no use she found in telling herself that she was free; she must keep her strength for struggling to put the selfish, unshared interest aside, and try to hide from Katharine's tender eyes the anxiety she was herself aware of, the sick eagerness which she feared would make her hang breathless on Katharine's words, and feel as if each wise reason she might bring forward in favor of leaving London was a sentence of banishment, a death-warrant to a hope which was already the sum of interest in life to her. What a terrible bondage to have fallen into since morning, and yet the next minute Christabel was smiling to herself. Since morning — one little day — and it was possible to live a week, a month, a year, a lifetime of days, every one of which might be rich with the same delight that this one had held.

CHAPTER XVII.

LETTERS.

KATHARINE was the first to reach home. While she waited for Christabel, she moved their tea-table from the neighborhood of the fire to the window recess, spread the tea before the open window, and placed a little bunch of violets among the cups and saucers to celebrate, on this first mild evening of the year, a change from their winter to their summer quarters, as important to them as going out of town is to other people. She had finished her arrangements some little time before Christabel appeared, yet she did not, as she had been in the habit of doing lately, greet her entrance with an exclamation of relief. She looked up eagerly indeed from a letter she had just finished reading, but there was some other thought than welcome of Christabel in her face, something so important that it had put ordinary thoughts aside for a while.

"Letters," said Christabel, hurrying up to her, and finding her heart sink with a vague foreboding as she looked into Katharine's deep eyes and tried to make out what the unusual expression in them meant. An augury of change, surely, but what of that? Christabel had always hitherto been ready for the next step, not having had any great stake in things as they were till now.

"Letters for us?"

"Yes, indeed; and one that will have a most important bearing on our discussion

to-night. I have hardly taken it in yet. At first sight it seems almost too good to be real, and that there must be objections underneath when we come to think it over. But let us have tea first. I had meant this to be our festival of settling into spring habits; and I intended to give our sunset chimney-pots an affectionate greeting for another summer's contemplation of them; and here comes a reversal of everything. But eat first. What have we to be afraid of, dearest? So long as we keep together, and our plans are progressing, what can it matter whether chimney-pots or snow-mountains reflect the sunsets we watch side by side?"

"Snow-mountains!" repeated Christabel slowly. "Then I suppose the result of your inquiries to-day convinces you of the uselessness of remaining longer in London, and that you must seek what you want further away; but I thought it was to be Paris."

"So it was this morning, but I had come to the conclusion just now that for *that* I must wait another whole year. I have consulted my friends, and even had a talk with Dr. Urquhart, who was wonderfully kind, and entered into the matter thoroughly; we won't say for whose sake, but certainly it was not through any special sympathy with my aims. It is perfectly true, as I feared. The one door which let one lady student through is closed forever against women in England. My year's private study has given me courage to persevere, and certainty of my own powers of endurance, but it has not advanced me a single step towards my end, and every month longer in London will be wasted time. Yet I had come to the sad conclusion that another summer at least must be wasted, for that our funds were not in a condition to allow us to risk such a step as removal to Paris, where we might be long before you got any work, and where, though we might easily find another Air Throne, we should not have such a landlady as Mrs. West, or such friends as the Urquharts. I came home out of heart, thinking that everything was against me. I am not so strong as I used to be since my illness, I think; and just as I was looking at our chimney-pots, and wondering how long the months of another summer of hope deferred would seem, I heard the postman's knock down below, and the next minute up came Mildred West with the letters we are going to read together after tea. You look pale, darling; you have walked too far. Let me see you eat and drink before we say anything more. Oh, when shall I have

MISS KEARY

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pg. 295

A DOUBTING HEART.

BY MISS KEARY,

AUTHOR OF "CASTLE DALY," "OLDBURY," ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE CHATEAU GARDENS.

"YES, yes, my child, but there are two sides to this question, as to every other, and I have lived so long here, and assisted, as was my duty, in arranging so many marriages, that I have come to feel even a little shocked at an English girl's manner of thinking on these subjects. There is a great deal to be said in favor of trusting to the experience and cooler judgment of parents and elders, who understand, as you young people do not, the large part which suitability of *entourage* — I cannot get the English word ; I am positively forgetting my English — plays in enabling two people to live comfortably together. If a girl were to tell me she had fallen in love — not that any French girl would dream of so terrible an indiscretion — I should recommend her mother to look after her well, and marry her to the most experienced middle-aged man of their acquaintance who was willing to take the responsibility of her guidance. That would be my idea."

"Poor Madelon," said Emmie West, peeping shyly up from under her large shady hat into the face of Madame de Florimel, at whose side she was pacing the broad terrace of the château garden, flanked on each side by orange-trees. "Poor Madelon, then I am afraid I have done more harm than good by confiding my fancies to you. Please don't think that she herself has ever given me any exact ground for them. But when you opened out your plan to me about the

épicier from Grasse, who has asked you to find him a wife in the village, and said you were thinking of Madelon, I could not help telling you what I had observed since I came here."

"So, so, it is in thy head, is it, little one, that this pretty romance of the olive-trees has grown up. Thou hast thy little ideas on these subjects, then, it seems."

"Yes, I have," said Emmie, taking courage to look back playfully into the keen, kind eyes that were scrutinizing her face. "Yes, madame, I have, but please don't advise my mother to marry me to the first prudent old man who would take the trouble of ruling me. I should not like it at all, and poor mamma would be very much puzzled to know how to set about such an enterprise."

"Precisely, that is the English way, and though, as everybody here is well aware, I am English, and even strongly English in all my habits and prejudices, this one custom of the country, the carelessness of mothers, passes my understanding. If you, my child, had belonged to me, see how it would have been between us. From the first hour of your life I should have watched your heart. There would have been no opportunity for an idea to enter that had not been shaped by my experience first. Then when the hour arrived for settling your destiny in marriage, there could have been no possibility of a conflict between our wills; you would have had no other thought but to approve my choice. Why has not your mother, who loves you, you say, so dearly, why has not she acted in a similar manner?"

"Poor mamma," cried Emmie; "if you only knew how many more important things she has to think about than my heart! Besides, don't you know, in England we think it right to leave all that. It may never come; and if it does—yes, dear madame, I will say it out, though you are lifting your eyebrows at me—I do think it must be best to choose a little for oneself, and even to love a little of one's own accord, if one is to marry."

Very delicately marked were the eyebrows that surprise, half feigned, half real, lifted up into a white brow, on which a few lines of age and care were written, lightly as with a fine pencil. And the rest of the face corresponded with the delicacy of these lines; a small, aquiline nose; firm, thin lips, that looked more accustomed to open for commands than entreaties; a skin, whose clear fineness had resisted forty-two years of exposure to southern sunshine and sixty of life; deep-set, grey

eyes, with a hint of kindly northern humor sweetening their habitual keenness; a figure as slim and alert as Emmie's own, which somehow managed, quite as remarkably as did the face, to express the combined results of early training and long habit, of English originality and French taste. This combination was particularly visible just now, as Madame de Florimel paused in their walk to look full at Emmie with lifted eyebrows and smiling eyes; her face daintily framed in a becoming French hood, and the skirt of her black silk dress drawn in a careless bunch through her pocket-holes, to set her thickly-soled feet free for the brisk exercise in which she delighted.

"Ah, voilà," she cried merrily, perceiving that her look of pretended surprise was calling fresh and fresh floods of crimson into Emmie's fair face. "We must look a little further into this by-and-by—that little letter of caution to thy mother will have to be written I think—but there precisely at this moment comes Joseph Marie, who can never manage so much as to take the cows out for a walk between the vines without calling me from talk with my friends. He is beckoning me to come down to the pond to speak with him, I will return soon and finish our discussion.

Emmie followed madame to the end of the terrace, and watched her as she nimbly descended a flight of marble steps that led from the upper garden, where a semblance of effort was maintained to drill the luxuriant vegetation in diamond and heart-shaped beds, to a wilderness below where nature and the advancing spring had taken the matter entirely into their own hands. How lovely the wilderness looked that sunny morning!—the borders of prickly-leaved artichokes, between which madame was now picking her way, the strip of green corn flaring with red anemones, the round pond at the bottom of the inclosure where Dr. Urquhart's green frogs were croaking, not in full chorus, indeed, but loud enough to secure that Emmie should never be ignorant of their existence again, the bed of violets that girdled the pond with a belt of vivid color, and sent out arrowy perfumes to where Emmie stood. Scent, warmth, color, strange, dissonant music, vivid, intense life in air and earth and sky, all seemed to expand Emmie's being into new perceptions of delight, as she stood imbibing them rather than thinking of them, while in her heart there was a curious reaching forth towards something yet to come; something which seemed only an echo of that call of the spring to which nature was responding so ardently.

When madame had disappeared behind the door of the cow-shed Emmie turned round and walked back towards the château. Shabby and out of repair as the white stone building really was, it looked a dazzling Aladdin's palace of marble in the strong midday sunshine, the very weather-stains and the green lizards that were basking here and there on the hot walls turning themselves into gems for its embellishment that day. Here too, even in the seldom-used apartments of the west wing were signs of activity: windows wide open; gay strips of carpet hanging over the railing of a balcony at the far end of the house into which two of madame's white-capped handmaidens had dragged some ancient gilded chairs and tapestry sofas, and were proceeding to evoke clouds of dust from them with their brooms. Presently Madelon came through the window on to the balcony to inspect the work and leaned over to nod and smile at Emmie as she passed below. Madelon being madame's principal favorite among the village maidens was generally invited to the château whenever anything unusual was in prospect, and as madame had sent her a summons yesterday on the receipt of a letter from England, she had appeared in the early morning, and had since been hovering from attic to cellar — supplementing the exertions of the servants, and welcomed warmly among them as the sure harbinger of some pleasant interruption to the slow routine of daily life there.

Yes, and even beyond the precincts of the château was this breeze of change noted and rejoiced in. By the great iron gates that opened on to the village road, little groups of children kept gathering and scattering while sometimes an older face looked in between the bars. Now it is old Madame Mule with a great bunch of canes from the river on her head, who stops and nods encouragement and congratulation, to the maidens who are dusting that magnificent château furniture for the astonishment of the guest who is coming from England to-morrow. Now it is M. le Curé himself in his cassock and curled hat, and the village blacksmith with his grimy face and forge apron, who stop to chat and look up at the balcony. Emmie cannot quite catch their words, but she guesses the cheerful nature of the conversation by the winks and nods and snaps of the fingers that accompany the talk.

"Our dear madame," so the talk runs, "is expecting her English relation to make her a little visit again this spring.

What a joy for our good madame, who is so English, and who will naturally rejoice to shew her relation some of the fine things he cannot see elsewhere, and of which he will no doubt speak a great deal when he gets back to his own miserable country! And precisely by good fortune, never for several years have the vines and the olive-groves, and the flower-fields of madame been looking so well as just now. Nor her *bêtes* so flourishing, nor have her wine and oil cellars, and her poultry-yard been so well furnished. Ah, ah — there will be some one who will open his eyes wide by-and-by — at the display made before him of so much prosperity and good management — due it must be confessed principally to the good sense and resolution of that brave Joseph Marie, in carrying out his own plans, and resisting madame's English innovations. Yet, since madame is good to every one, one would not grudge, one would indeed rejoice heartily with her in the triumph she is expecting."

Having come to this happy conclusion they moved on and another little group formed of young girls from the river with piled baskets of white linen on their heads, who were still more enthusiastic in their exclamations of delight at the sight of the old furniture and the prospect of a guest at the château. The whole place was bubbling over with festivity, and somehow the joy did not seem exaggerated to Emmie, considering who it was that was coming to-morrow, with news from home (her Salle Street letters had spoken of a visit he had made there lately for the purpose of carrying the last intelligence to her); and with what sort of a look, joyful or sorrowful, on the speaking face that seemed to answer to her thoughts and interpret them as no other had ever done.

Emmie turned at the end of the terrace and walked back to meet Madame de Florimel, now approaching from the lower garden, and as she buried her face in a bunch of daffodils, she wondered whether Katharine Moore herself in like circumstances, could help feeling as foolishly happy as she felt just then. Madame, who seldom troubled herself to gather flowers, having long since had a surfeit of them, appeared, however, at the top of the marble steps with three or four primroses and a cowslip between her fingers, poor little withered blooms, the only shabby ones in the gardens, which she had gathered behind the cow-shed in a shady spot where the roots had been planted long ago. Her eyes

were fixed upon them when Emmie joined her, and the expression of her face had a very unusual touch of melancholy.

"See," she said, "how unhappy my English primroses look in the grand company they find themselves among. Wynyard Anstice brought them from the woods at Leigh, the last time he came here with his uncle. But I made a mistake in asking for them; I might have known well enough that living things transplanted from one country to another never come to much good, or are happy."

"Madame — but you, madame," cried Emmie, surprised by her quick sympathy into answering to the thought instead of the words of her companion.

Madame was not at all accustomed to being understood better than she intended, and being talkative by nature had fallen into a habit of indulging in spoken reveries, which, with Madelon or the good curé by her side, had brought no other inconvenience than that of confirming her companions in their chronic contempt for madame's English ideas. She turned rather sharply to look at Emmie now, but could find nothing to alarm or offend her in the sweet wistfulness with which the girl's reverential eyes were trying to read her face. Had she not lately been saying that had Providence blessed her with a daughter like this, there should only be one heart and one soul between them, and indeed —

A swift thought darted through madame's inventive brain, so delicious to her that it nearly drove away the sad reflections that had occupied her during her progress up the garden; then, seeing as by a flash of lightning how the two trains of thought, the sad and the joyful, might be made to fit into each other, she grasped after the fleeting melancholy, and said musingly, as she laid the stalks of her English flowers together in a bouquet, —

"Ah, my child, the sight of these flowers has brought my thoughts back to the subject we were discussing when I was called away: the question of how the great event in a girl's life should be conducted. You think it strange in me, so entirely English as I am in all my principles, to have adopted French notions on the subject of forming marriages; but I followed your plan when I was young, my child. I chose for myself, and having given up all other ties for the man whose society I believed enough for my happiness, I have lived a very solitary life in this place for forty years. Yes, it is nearly forty years since I began to spend my time chiefly alone

here, — with affectionate neighbors and occupations, — but alone, as you see."

"M. le Comte died, then, so soon after your marriage," said Emmie.

"He died at Monaco two years ago, my child, of a sudden seizure at the gaming-table, where he had long been accustomed to spend his nights and days. We had different ideas, different habits, a different faith. I occupied myself with his interests to the last, and I have done my best to save something out of the ruin he made for my son — to create an existence for him which he will perhaps appreciate when I am gone."

"Ah, you have your son."

"For two or three years of his childhood I had him, but he was educated apart from me, and in growing up he has removed himself further and further from my influence. He is an ardent Catholic, and his spiritual advisers do not advocate his spending much of his time with an English mother. I have only twice seen his wife and child. I am a lonely old woman, as you see, and when I am not occupied with my *ménage* and my farming, I fall to speculating on the difference it would have made in my own life, and in some other lives, if I had taken my father's and mother's advice, and accepted the husband they had planned for me."

Emmie's sympathetic eyes asked for more; and madame, laughing, as she lightly struck her cheek with the bouquet she had arranged to her mind by this time, went on.

"Ah, what a lover of love-stories we have here. You will not be content, I see, till you have drawn the whole history out of me; and you are wondering already how a girl of eighteen — your own age, I think — came already to have two lovers."

"No," said Emmie quickly, "for the girl of eighteen was you."

"So an English girl can make a pretty speech, or has she learned it already from Madelon? However, the second suitor in my estimation was no great conquest, and I don't think it ever came into my head to consider him a lover at all. He was my cousin, a certain Wynyard Anstice, whom I had known all my life, in my baby days, as a big, teasing, over-affectionate schoolboy, and afterwards as a grave young man, who came to our house at regular intervals, and was always more and more intent on matters that did not interest me, and more and more tiresomely determined to thrust himself and them on my notice.

"Was he at all like the relation, the Mr. Wynyard Anstice, who is coming here

to-morrow ; but no, there cannot be any likeness."

" Why not ? " asked madame, raising her eyebrows again. " Relations are alike sometimes. However, you are right in your guess ; the present Wynyard Anstice does not get his good looks or his pleasant ways from our side of the house, though he is an Anstice at the bottom, and can even remind me of his uncle when he turns obstinate. My cousin Wynyard was an eldest son, and his father was a rich man, while mine, though the head of the family, was absolutely poor for our station. Titled poverty has been my lot through life, and I have learned to accustom myself to its straits and its unsubstantial dignities, till I doubt whether I could accommodate myself to anything else. Even then I had imbibed a certain contempt for my uncle, because he had early in life married the daughter of a wealthy trading family, and allowed his name to be associated with theirs in the business from which their riches were drawn ; and when the eldest son showed a real talent for affairs, and threw himself with energy into the pursuits of his mother's family, all his chance of success with me was over forever. I was a foolish, wilful girl, as I said before, and I had my way. Sometimes, in my lonely hours, I amuse myself by figuring the life I might have had if my mother had had hers. It would not have been all roses, any more than is this, but there would have been perhaps greater compensations. I should have lived among old friends, and during a great part of my middle life in my own childhood's home ; for my only brother died soon after my father, and the Leigh estates, such as they were, came to my cousin, who lived in the old house till he died."

" And never married ? "

" But not for love of me. Misfortunes follow some people, and my cousin was destined to suffer from a much deeper heart-wound than any I gave him. The winter after my brother's death he came to La Roquette to pay me a long visit. There were matters of business to discuss between us, and I think he found a certain satisfaction in seeing how things were here, and in bringing his once despised acuteness to my aid, using it to protect me from some of the worst consequences of the position in which I had placed myself. That year the *maisonnette* on the hill was fitted up, and I invited a dear English friend with her daughter to spend the first winter in it. The daughter was a charming girl, thoroughly English, but of a type

I had not seen before, full of little enthusiasms and notions which she would quite forget herself in defending. I was French enough then to be doubtful of my friend's wisdom in having allowed her daughter to run beyond her so far ; but my grave elderly cousin was thoroughly bewitched, over head and ears in love, after the second morning of arguing and dawdling together up and down this terrace. I confess I used my influence with the mother and the young girl to give matters the turn he wished, feeling that I owed my cousin something. It was one of the few mistakes in that way I have ever made in my life. They were engaged in this garden. Ah ! me, I can see them coming up the marble steps together, he all radiant, and eager to tell me of his success, and she blushing and smiling at the thought of the pleasure the news would give to her mother and me. But it did not answer. On closer acquaintance she grew alarmed at his imperious temper, that clashed perpetually with her ideas, and soon after they returned to England she jilted him to marry the younger of his two half-brothers, young men who had grown up since I left England, and to whom my elder cousin had acted the part of a father."

" This girl and the young brother were Mr. Wynyard Anstice's father and mother, then ? "

" You have guessed it. That is his special link on to me, and indeed he is the only one of my English relations in the younger generation that I trouble myself to keep up an acquaintance with. I can't help clinging to him, and the attraction seems mutual ; for here, after rather a long interval, and without any pressing of mine, he comes proposing to spend a few weeks with me. It will bring a crowd of old recollections to have him here again, with those looks and ways that have so much of his mother in them. An unlucky resemblance, for it has cost him a fortune already. His parents both died in India a few years after their marriage, and left him a legacy to his uncle's care, with, I believe, a great many professions of repentance for their past conduct towards him. The old man behaved very well, and accepted the charge of the child, reluctantly at first, but growing fond of him by degrees, and treating him in all respects like a son. I was glad when I saw what a fine handsome boy the little Wynyard was, not so like his mother as to awaken painful recollections, but with a great deal of her brightness, and sweetness of nature.

" For some years it seemed as if my

cousin had at last succeeded in binding one living creature to himself; and I hearing of it, and seeing it, for the two paid several visits here together, rejoiced that the doom of utter solitude had not come upon us both, that a little bit of natural cheerfulness and family love had visited my old home once more. It did very well while Wynyard was a boy, for he has a fine temper, and so long as there was only the question of yielding his wishes in every-day matters, his bright good-humor made all easy; but when the time came for him to think for himself, and he developed the same tendency to take up enthusiasms his mother had had, then — well, I understood the conflict that followed better it may be than any one else. It was affection intensified by recollections of past pain, quite as much as a tyrannical temper, that made my poor cousin resent so bitterly the differences of opinion that grew up between himself and his darling when the boy approached manhood. If Wynyard could have agreed with him on every point, and fallen in with all his prejudices, he would have felt himself avenged, so to speak, of the old desertion; but when the one person he had allowed himself to love in his later years chose to think and act for himself in a manner directly opposed to his judgment, all his former affection turned to gall, and he seemed to lose even his sense of justice."

"Did he die unforgiving?" asked Emmie anxiously.

"It was a seizure at the last. Wynyard was sent for, and the other nephew, who is now Lord Anstice, and they were both with him for the last week of his life. He recovered consciousness a few hours before the end, and seemed pleased, so Wynyard told me, to see him so near, speaking to him as of old, as if there had never been any quarrel. But if he remembered the injustice he had committed, and wished to undo it, it was too late then. Wynyard, at all events, was not one to allow last moments to be disturbed with thoughts of worldly possessions. It had always been supposed that the large fortune my cousin inherited from his father would go to Wynyard, and that the other nephew would have the Anstice estates, which had greatly increased in value under my cousin's management. When the will came to be read, however, it was found that Wynyard's name was left out, and that the whole of the property went to the other nephew, an idle young man, who had never been a favorite with his uncle till just at the last, when he took him up

to punish Wynyard for his independence. Wynyard makes very light of the disappointment, professing to think it only fair that he should be left to abide by the principles he had chosen, and prove that he understood what he was about when he said they were sufficient for him. All that is beyond me — belonging indeed to regions of thought into which I do not profess to have entered — and I suppose I ought to be glad to see my father's title in the way of being properly supported at last; but I don't think I am. I like the old simplicity and the dignity that owed nothing to wealth; and I can't escape feeling as if the injustice done to Wynyard may be traced back to influence I exercised here, in walks up and down this terrace long ago. If I had not planned a little too eagerly just that once in my life, matters might have adjusted themselves more smoothly. The two young people who married afterwards would have met and liked each other all the same, doubtless; but there would have been no previous promise to make their love a treachery to the elder brother; or they would never have met, and my cousin would have divided his possessions justly among his heirs, uninfluenced by old loves and grudges. But forgive me, my child, I have been talking to myself instead of to you for the last ten minutes. It is a bad habit I have fallen into through living so much alone. Excuse me."

Emmie's face did not suggest the need of any apology, but Madame de Florimel was no longer looking at it, her eyes had for some time been fixed on a distant part of the garden, as if she had been calling up recollections of vanished figures to people it with.

"I live so much alone," she continued, "that when I am walking up and down here, I fall into a way of following out my own thoughts. It is among the old days that I live instead of in the present, fancying how this and that would have been, if one or the other person had acted differently, or if circumstances had occurred otherwise than they did. Ah, well; but now you see, my child, our argument is ended. I have told you a chapter out of my own history, all *à propos* of Madelon's prospects, to convince you that you had better leave her parents and myself to settle her marriage. If my friend, the Grasse *épicier*, whom I have long known, and with whose affairs I am well acquainted, should approve himself to us elders, you young ones will do well to acquiesce in our decision. It is a tangled

web, my child, this life that we are all in, and it needs experienced hands to lay thread and thread together. Ah, here comes Madelon to tell us that the *charette* is waiting to take you back to the *maisonnette*. You have made this morning of waiting pass pleasantly, my child, and you must not forget to express my gratitude to your good aunt for sparing you to me. It is an amiable person, this Lady Rivers, though somehow or other I—but what am I about, maundering to myself again? I must have entered my dotage to-day. Let us go and see if Madelon has remembered to put the flowers I gathered for your aunt under the *charette* seat."

CHAPTER XIX.

RED ANEMONES.

THE bright sunshiny mornings did not always bring Emmie West such long leisure as she had enjoyed in the château garden when Madame de Florimel had confided to her a chapter of her early history. Even to the pretty *maisonnette* on the side of the hill, there would come every now and then dark days—and there was sure to be one hour in each day—when Emmie was tempted to wish herself back in dingy Saville Street, finding that uninterrupted sunshine out of doors did not quite make up for gloom inside the house. Entire days of discomfort occurred whenever a badly-cooked dinner, or a suspicion that Madame la Comtesse had singled out Emmie for attentions due to some one else, aggravated Lady Rivers into a state of temper that refused rest to herself or any one under her control. The hour of trial that came with each day was caused by Lady Rivers's impatience to get her letters, and was spent in weary watching for the approach of the *facteur* down the steep road that connected La Roquette with the little mountain town which was its nearest point of contact with a world concerning itself with letters.

The eagerness of the present inhabitants of the little château to have their share of news at a particular hour of the day, was an ever-recurring surprise and scandal to the cheery old *facteur*. He was accustomed to place the weekly newspaper, or the rare letter he brought to the scattered farmhouses he visited in his rounds, on the topmost doorstep, or on the wooden ledge where the marmites dried themselves under the kitchen window, and to leave them there to greet the eyes of their owners when they returned in the evening from their day's work among their olives

and vines. He did not know how to shrug his shoulders high enough in contempt of people who wasted good daylight in watching on their doorstep for his arrival, as Emmie West watched every day. Though he was too true a Frenchman not to have a smile and a polite word of excuse ready when the eyes that watched and reproached him for his delays were as pretty as Emmie's, he could not reconcile himself to having his right to take his *déjeuner* leisurely by the roadside so questioned.

To people who passed the entire day in doing nothing, what would it matter at what hour they had their letters? Madame la Comtesse was more reasonable, and far from requiring her budget at a particular time of the day, allowed him to spare himself the long descent into her valley, and to leave her letters at the *maisonnette* to be carried down the hill by one of the farm people at their leisure. Why should any one be more particular than madame, and, above all, what could one want with so many letters every day? Two, four, half a dozen.

The *facteur* could not restrain a glance of curiosity darting from his dark southern eyes, as he counted these numbers, day after day, into Emmie's hand. A little joke about a "*bien aimé*" hovered on his lips, which never, however, got itself said, for Emmie, though accessible enough at other times, always looked grave when she was taking in the letters.

Who could say what aggravations to temper for Aunt Rivers might not be folded up in one or another of them?

She generally remained for a moment on the steps outside, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking after the *facteur* till he had passed the hedge of roses, now full of pink blooms, at the bottom of the garden, just to refresh herself with as much sunshine as possible, before turning back to the house to confront Lady Rivers with a handful of fateful letters.

Madame's valley, with all its scattered dwellings, lies spread out like a panorama at her feet. The groups of houses she spies from her high station, here by a red roof in a bosquet of grey olives, there by a thin column of smoke rising through the thick, high canes that border the river, these all contain friends, and have associations for Emmie now. She knows who owns that group of fig-trees, whose branches hold up buds like delicate green cups, high in the air—who is the orchard of quince and almond, at the opening of the valley—and to whom belongs the vineyard on the other side of the winding

road, where the dwarf vines have clothed themselves promisingly with downy leaves, and clusters with a good smell. Ah, the winter is over and done indeed, "the fig-tree puts forth her leaves, the vines have a good smell," and Emmie's heart, today, adds softly to the ancient spring-tide love-song—"and he has come."

Down there in the great white house all bathed in sunshine, he opened his eyes this morning on all this beauty, and perhaps to-day—

But what is Emmie doing, keeping Lady Rivers waiting so long for her six letters? The glow fades from her face as she turns to enter the hushed, shaded house where as much as possible of the freshness and brightness is shut out to suit the invalid's fancies; bent, Emmie sometimes thinks, on depriving herself of the advantages they have come so far to seek, and on bringing as much of the excitement of her London life about her as she can lay hold on under the circumstances. Emmie puts it down to the worry of expecting and reading these daily letters, that her aunt's cheek has not lost its hectic flush, and that her nightly sleeplessness and morning cough have scarcely at all abated. She even took it on herself to suggest to Alma that the letters from Eccleston Square had better for the future be written more carefully; but the caution did not avail. Lady Rivers fretted so much more at not receiving full descriptions of all the Kirkman parties, that the old practice of giving full details had to be resumed; and Emmie again spent the greater part of the fresh sunny mornings in reading aloud accounts of London gaieties which Alma dutifully despatched day by day for her mother's consolation during her exile from all such delights. These narrations to Emmie's ears sounded pleasant enough, and seemed to set forth a very prosperous state of things. She never got quite to understand what were the jarring notes, or why certain names and sentences should bring a quick gasp in her aunt's breathing, and that frightened, baffled look in her eyes, so painful to see.

"Laurence! Are you quite sure the name is Laurence? You read so carelessly, Emmie, my dear. It could not possibly be young Laurence with whom Constance went to the opera while Sir John was laid up with a sore throat. Look again. Ah, yes, as you say, Alma was there too, but then Alma must have given up her engagement for the Kirkmans' great dinner on Horace's birthday—given it up, too, at the last moment. How could

Constance be so wilful? What are they all thinking of? There would be two places vacant at the Kirkmans' dinner-table! Sir Francis would not dine there without Alma; he would not sacrifice himself so far as that. I know him. It's a selfish world, Emmie, my dear, and we poor mothers who are ready to do anything, *anything* for our children's good, must see the plans we have toiled ourselves to death to carry out defeated by other people's folly and selfishness. There, you had better go away and open your own letter. You have been peeping under the envelope all the time I have been talking. Nobody ever does seem to see my anxieties, or care for what I suffer." Then a great tear would gather in the faded, fevered eyes, and falling, blot out young Laurence's obnoxious name on Alma's sheet.

It certainly did appear hard to Lady Rivers to find that old enemy of hers, whom she believed she had so thoroughly routed and crushed long ago, starting up in her path again with power to put obstacles in the way of her present projects, even if still sorcer heartburnings and terrors in the future need not be foreboded from his reappearance on the scene. More frequently, however, it was the omission of a name in Alma's letters that troubled her.

"Is that all, Emmie?" she would ask. "Are you sure? Let us look through the crossing again. Another long letter without a word of Horace Kirkman in it! Of course when a girl like Alma is engaged, one does not expect her to dwell much upon her feelings and—that sort of thing, but I should like to know at least how often he calls, she might tell me *so much*, I think, and whether she is pleased with the presents he brings her. Let me recollect—yes—it is a long time, more than a week since Alma mentioned Horace in her letter, and then she spoke almost, I thought, as if she had been annoyed with him for sending her such an expensive valentine. You would not think it a serious fault in a lover—the not knowing how to make you handsome enough presents, would you, Emmie? You would be grateful for such an elegant valentine as Alma found fault with, now would you not?"

"I don't know," answered Emmie, reluctant to contradict, yet unable to rest under the imputation of admiring Mr. Horace Kirkman's style of courtship. "If I liked a person *very* much, I suppose I should not mind his giving me useless things that cost a great deal of money, however silly I might think it."

"Ah, well," said Lady Rivers coldly, "you are not likely to be tried in that way, my dear. Your lover, if ever you have one, will probably not have money to spend on useless presents, so it is quite as well that you should not acquire a taste for them. You may read me any part of your mother's letter that is interesting enough to take my thoughts from my own troubles. I know she is grateful to me for all my goodness to you and to Aubrey, and it soothes me to hear what she says about how badly you would both have been situated but for me."

Then Emmie glanced breathlessly down the pages of her letter for one of those meek sentences about "my obligations to dear Aunt Rivers for giving you such a happy winter," with which Mrs. West did not fail to sprinkle her epistles, or for some harmless home incident that could be read out without revealing the family straits too plainly. For Emmie was inconsistent enough to resent that little taunt about the probable poverty of her future lover, and even to feel it keenly, though she did hate the Kirkmans so much, and though her dear countess had imbued her with a greater contempt than ever for vulgar wealth. She was seldom, however, allowed to read far without interruption.

"Dr. Urquhart has given Mildie tickets for some lectures on physics, and Mrs. Urquhart has promised to take her to the first lecture in the doctor's brougham," she began.

"Physic! what a disagreeable subject for a lecture," Lady Rivers struck in. "If Mildie had to take as much as I, she would not care to hear it lectured about. However, I am glad the Urquaharts pay so much attention to Mildie, it looks well," and Emmie, finding that her cheeks were tingling under her aunt's meaning smile, dashed headlong into another subject.

"Mamma took her watch the other day to — Oh, that is not interesting."

"Go on, my dear, it interests me. Your mother wears the old watch still that she had when she married; mine was worn out ages ago, but I observe I never get such good things as other people. Your mother's watch wanted mending then, at last?"

"It was not that, exactly," hesitated Emmie. "She took her watch to an old watchmaker, a friend of the Moores, and she says he was very kind and liberal to her about it, — but here is something much better worth reading down here about the Moores. Christabel is not going to Zurich at Easter after all — Katharine finds she cannot get lodgings, so Christa-

bel is to remain in Saville Street all the summer. Mamma is very glad, and so is Mildie, though they don't appear to see much of Christabel now. She is out a great deal, and has made many new friends. Old David Macvie, the watchmaker, complained of this to mamma, and was quite in low spirits because she so seldom has time to visit him."

"An old watchmaker! Why should any one visit him? I don't think I care to hear any more, my dear. You may open a crack of the jalousies now. I think I could bear a little more light, and that I might look at the illustrated paper dear Mrs. Kirkman has sent me again this week without hurting my head. Perhaps I shall find an account of their dinner-party on Horace's birthday. It will amuse me very well to look at that, and you may send Ward with my afternoon tea and go out for a little while, if you like."

The permission was always joyfully received, but never, perhaps, quite so eagerly as on the afternoon of the last recorded conversation, just two days after Emmie's visit to the château garden. She lingered after her dismissal only long enough to summon Ward to her duties, and snatch her own shady hat from its peg in the hall. Then she ran down the steep steps into the flower-garden, and drew a deep breath to blow away any lingering flavor of Kirkman entertainments or depressing views of human nature that might hang about her, contradicting the sunny beauty of the outside world into which she had emerged, and the joyous hope in her heart that responded to it.

Hush, hush! She paused in tying her hat-strings, and ran swiftly down the steep garden path between rows of sweetly-smelling beans, till she reached the point where the hill dipped steeply towards the ravine, and then stood still to listen again. The cicadas and the green frogs were making a little less noise than usual. Above their harsh voices, and above the tinkle of the distant rivulet, Emmie distinguished three clear liquid notes coming from an almond-tree half way down the near side of the hill. Ah, and now three other notes, liquid and sweet, answer from beyond the river. Again the call, and the loving, sweet reply.

Emmie had never heard a nightingale's voice in her life, and had hitherto looked on nightingales as a half-mythical kind of bird known chiefly to poets, but she does not doubt their identity to-day, for Madelon had told her that nightingales would sing all day and all night in the valley when

spring had really come, and had not spring come completely since yesterday? She smiled to think how many quotations would have risen to Mildie's lips on such an occasion, while she herself could not recall one good enough. "Most musical, most melancholy." Oh no, no, not melancholy at all. English nightingales might be melancholy singing at night in solemn cathedral closes, but that one in the almond-tree on the hill, singing in the hot, hot sunshine, with a cloudless sky overhead and countless flowers below, was so happy, and had so much to say to his love in the orange-grove on the opposite slope, that he did not know how to hurry out his notes fast enough. Emmie would not disturb the sweet talk by walking through the coppice, so she turned up the hill and determined to take another and longer route to the orange-tree house where she had promised Madelon to call that afternoon.

The open road winding on the ridge of the hill has advantages which Emmie has learned to appreciate by this time. As she climbs, she stops to rest every now and then, and looking backward sees a wide view spread out at her feet, so that no doings in the distant village could escape her. If Joseph Marie, for example, had brought the *charette* round to the principal door of the château, Emmie would have seen it dwarfed to the size of a toy chariot, with mice for horses, and Joseph Marie no bigger than a frog for charioteer. But no, there is nothing unusual going on at the château. The diminished courtyard and gardens lie open in their usual sleepy afternoon stillness to the glaring sunshine, not a figure stirring, the jalousies all closed, and the straight avenues between the orange-trees and the magnolias quite empty. There is nothing to be seen in the village street either, but a few women with their water-jugs or their linen-baskets on their heads; but farther away Emmie descries a strange vehicle emerging from the lower entrance to Madelon's valley. Yes, a strange vehicle—not madame's *charette*, or any *charette* belonging to the village. Can it be that the threatened grocer from Grasse has already been paying a visit to the orange-tree house in this formal style?

Emmie's curiosity was sufficiently aroused to induce her to quicken her pace. By the time she reached the path leading down into Madelon's valley, she had lost sight of the village and gained a yet wider horizon. More and more valleys, more and more olive-crowned hills, further and further away patches of parti-colored fields,

showing like fairy gardens in the golden afternoon light, and furthest of all, between the opening heights on the far horizon another blue, deeper, more dazzling than the blue overhead, a moving, living radiance, the blue of the Mediterranean melting and losing itself in the trembling sky-line.

It was almost a rest to turn into the green darkness of the pine-wood after looking at so much light, and Emmie made her way quickly to the head of the valley where a tiny mountain rivulet burst from the rocky hillside and began its course through the ravine. A flock of sheep and goats, conducted by a young shepherdess, followed her down the steep, and for years afterwards, whenever Emmie thought of La Roquette, it was that particular scene and its accompanying sounds and sensations that came vividly back to her. The tinkling of the sheep-bells; the gurgle of the rivulet through ferns and mosses that choked its shallow bed; the little shepherdess's shrill voice calling her dog; deep evening stillness but for these sounds, and a sense of solitude greater even than had been felt on the lonely road with its wide views. Here there was only the dark vista of the pine-wood she had passed through, the sheltering hillsides all around her, the depths of shadowy verdure at her feet, and, above all, a glowing line of crimson light where the height from whence she had descended caught the rays of the setting sun.

Her heart echoed back the peace, the joyful calm with which the little valley, from its crowning crimson height to its cool emerald depths, overflowed. All within her was in harmony with the outside serenity then. Then, but never so complete again in all her future life, for, in looking back, she counted that evening as the last of her unconscious girlish days, the point after which she began to have a stake of her own; a private life or death stake in existence. "When I was a girl," always afterwards meant for Emmie West the years lying behind that evening's walk through the valley. She was, however, quite innocent of any grave reflections at the time, and had not the least idea when she turned her back on the pine-wood and took the narrow footpath by the river, that she was walking into her womanhood, and leaving something behind her there to which she would look back regretfully as long as she lived.

She was thinking of Madelon as she hastened on, wondering what o'clock it was, and whether she should be so fortunate as

to meet her at her washing-shed, and be spared the long delays which a formal call at the orange-tree house always involved.

The washing-shed consisted of a few stakes driven into the river-bank, and overlaid with trailing vines and gourds which some one (Madelon never particularized further) had put up and adorned for her special accommodation last summer. It had looked like a mere heap of stakes in the early spring, but now a few downy vine-leaves and gourd-shoots were opening themselves out to show the kind of trellis-work that would roof it by-and-by, and in this recess, according to her wishes, Emmie came upon Madelon.

For once in her life she was not at work, but standing with her hands in her apron, looking up at the budding branches over her head. Emmie called her, and her face relaxed into smiles and dimples, when she saw who was near.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Emmé, how I have wanted you!" and then came greeting kisses on each cheek, and an eager acceptance on Madelon's part of Emmie's proposal that they should finish the walk to the little château through the coppice together.

"I have so wished to see mademoiselle," Madelon repeated several times, glancing with quite unwonted shyness into Emmie's face as they walked along the river path together.

"But you saw me the day before yesterday, Madelon?"

"Ah, yes, mademoiselle, but it already seems long ago; things happen of which, perhaps, I ought not to speak; but mademoiselle is so kind, and she has besides a look in her eyes, that will draw the words from my lips I know, before we have been long together."

"Then you may as well begin to tell me at once, Madelon."

Instead of beginning, Madelon looked cautiously round; they were surely quite alone and safe from listeners in this secluded part of the valley, Emmie urged. No, not so utterly alone, it seemed; sounds of some one at work high up among the olives on the opposite slope of the hill might be heard if one listened, as Madelon had evidently been listening a minute or two ago. The ring of an axe, and a strong man's voice singing at intervals.

"It is Antoine," said Madelon, "at work always, late as it is, mademoiselle sees. There is no young man in the neighborhood who has more courage for work, or is a better son; but what avails it all, if people quarrel and misunderstand each

other? — Ah, mademoiselle, I speak because my heart is full. Let us climb by this path towards the little château, and when we are in the bosquet, I shall be able to tell mademoiselle a little of what I am feeling."

"Yes," Madelon began, when the shelter of the wood was gained and there was no voice any longer to be heard but the nightingale's singing very loud and clear from a fig tree — "Yes, I am very unhappy to-day. Madame la Comtesse is so kind to me, you see, so kind! even concerning herself like a mother to plan a future for me, and yet, alas! I cannot be as grateful to her as I ought."

And then, as they slowly threaded the tangled path in the ever-deepening gloom, Emmie found herself listening to the first love-story at first hand, that had ever been told her.

The great stress of the trouble, so far as Madelon's words showed it at first, lay in the fact that madame's kindness should be in the way of being so unworthily appreciated by one who owed her so much gratitude; but Emmie, who could not feel greatly moved on this account, began to see something else behind all these words as the talk went on, and Madelon, twisting her apron-strings round and round her fingers as shyly as an English girl, fell into digressions and reminiscences that had less and less to do with madame's share of the grievance. That story of the fierce dog that used to guard the oil-mill on the way to the schoolhouse, which Madelon had never dared to pass all through her school-days without Antoine's holding her hand; the fête-day when they had walked in procession together; incidents of other memorable fête-days — down to that late one, when, under the chestnut-trees, in the village *place*, Antoine had even spoken of speaking soon to his father and mother, urging that though they were both so young, something should be settled, lest other plans should be thought of by the elders for either of them.

"And now," Madelon concluded, "to think that the danger which seemed distant then should have arrived, and that madame herself should have brought it about. Madame, whose preference has been my pride and Antoine's boast all our lives — ah," Madelon choked herself with a great sob as she tried to draw back into her first entrenchments — "ah, it is terrible to feel so little gratitude towards madame, when she has, as my mother points out, given me a crowning proof of her good opinion: going so far as even to choose a

husband for me. It is my inability to feel rightly towards madame that weighs upon my conscience, — it is that truly."

"But does not your mother know about Antoine?" asked Emmie. "Cannot she help you?"

"Three months ago," answered Madelon sorrowfully, "my mother was favorable, and also his mother, or you will easily believe, mademoiselle, that those little words under the chestnut-trees would not have been spoken; but there has since been that *maudite* quarrel between our fathers all about nothing, and my mother resents the hard words that have been spoken. She has her pride, and why should she not? She does not choose that our family should be treated with disrespect by neighbors a little while ago no richer or more thought of than ourselves, and — at such a moment — ah, mademoiselle, to think of M. Bouchillon coming to ask me of my parents in a *charette* handsomer even than the one in which madame drives to the English church, and also that he has brought a present of a Paris clock to my mother; and it was only last Sunday afternoon after vespers that he made my acquaintance. My poor Antoine! What chance is there for him against a man of such solid pretensions as that? He does not know what has happened yet, or he would not have been singing over his work on the hill as mademoiselle heard just now. But what can he think, what can he hope, when he hears?"

"He will be very unhappy?"

"*Il m'aime,*" said Madelon simply.

"And you, Madelon?" asked Emmie. She knew well enough already, but some demon of sympathetic curiosity impelled her to try to get a nearer view of this half unknown, half strangely familiar thing of which they were talking.

Madelon put her much tortured apron up to her eyes.

"Mademoiselle must pray for me," she faltered, "that my heart may be brought to respond with suitable gratitude to the wishes of madame and of my parents."

"But for yourself, Madelon; have you no doubts about your own wishes? M. Bouchillon and his solid pretensions don't tempt you at all?"

"But no, mademoiselle — when one loves, when one has loved from one's childhood — you understand, mademoiselle."

"Yes," said Emmie softly. "It is beautiful, I think, to love so. I will pray for you, Madelon, but I shall pray that your parents, and madame too, may come to

think as you do about this, and that you may be happy with the one who has loved you all your life. I would not give him up, I think, if I were you — no, I am sure I would not."

"Ah, mademoiselle is English," said Madelon, shaking her head — but her hand stole out from under her apron, and clasped Emmie's, and the two girls walked on together to the end of the wood, holding hands in a silent sympathy which each felt could not be made more perfect by further explanations, though before many minutes were over their thoughts had sundered, and each was following out her own dream in a very different track.

"If Alma had been true-hearted like this French girl," Emmie was thinking, "how happy her life might have been! What a beautiful love she would have had!"

The gate at the end of the wood opened close to the brow of the hill, and as they approached, it looked like a gate of ebony standing out against the sky where the after-glow was burning still. For a moment Emmie's eyes were dazzled. The change from the wood to the open hill-top was like a coming out from night into daylight again, but as soon as she recovered her sight she perceived a figure, leaning over the garden railings among the rose-trees, and her heart gave a great foolish bound, just as if she had not been thinking of *that person* all the time she had been in the wood, and had not hoped through every minute of her long walk that *he* would be there when she came back. The perverse, self-teasing spirit that had sent her so far away on that particular afternoon had been exorcised by Madelon's talk — and she knew and now confessed to herself what a bitter, bitter disappointment it would have been if he had not waited till she came back.

Wynyard caught sight of her just as she reached the gate, and, leaping the rose hedge, met her as she came through. His face looked quite radiant with the glow of the sunset, and the pleasant consciousness that he was the bearer of welcome news, and half unconsciously he held out both hands and took Emmie's hands, flowers and all, into their grasp.

"Did I not tell you," he cried, "that we should meet on a hillside when you would be more at home here than I? But how is it that you did not expect me? Had you forgotten that I was to come to-day with my pockets full of letters and parcels from Saville Street, or have you become indifferent to letters like the rest of the people here? But for these red anemones in

your hands, which betray your English love of gathering, I should say you looked naturalized already — as if you were a part of a place."

If he meant to say, part of the glowing sunset, part of the rich, sweet beauty of the hilltop and of the golden evening, Emmie's looks would not have contradicted his thought; and though the enigmatical words conveyed nothing to her ear, she could not miss the look of half-surprised playful admiration that went with them. He had always hitherto seen her grave or embarrassed, a little ashamed of her dress, a little puzzled or troubled about one thing or another. This ardent, blushing, happy face, lifted up towards him, radiant with health and welcome, and reflecting harmonious surroundings only, was quite a new revelation.

"I hoped you would come. I knew you would have a great deal to tell me about Saville Street," Emmie said. "And of course I want to hear."

He turned with her, and they had reached the rose fence before Emmie recollecting that she had not said good-bye to Madelon; that they had not spoken since those bold words of encouragement to constancy had passed between them in the wood, and she did not like to part without a farewell. Madelon would think it cold-hearted.

"One minute," she said to Wynyard, "wait one minute, I will be back before you have time to unfasten that little gate among the beans through which we must go back into the garden, for I have too much respect for madame's roses to jump over them as you did just now."

Madelon was still standing at the entrance of the wood, and there was a very meaning look on her face when she raised it for Emmie's good-night salutation.

"Ah, but mademoiselle is very happy," she whispered a little grudgingly. "Everything settles itself so well for *her* future, as one can see. The relation of madame, who comes to her with a message from her mother, and one so handsome, so noble-looking — ah, mademoiselle, why did you not then tell me a little?"

"No, no, Madelon, you are mistaken — you must not think *that* indeed."

"But, yes, mademoiselle, when a young man like that comes to one from one's mother, there cannot be a mistake ; there is only one thing to think. But I will be silent till mademoiselle gives me permission to speak. I will merely comfort myself now and then by thinking of the happiness that is coming to madame, and to

the whole village, when we are allowed to share her satisfaction in such a beautiful arrangement."

There was no use in arguing the point with Madelon, even if Emmie had had breath to argue such a matter. She turned away and walked to the little gate among the beans very slowly, though Wynyard was waiting for her there. She wanted to still the pulses that throbbed in her ears above the nightingale's song, and to bring her trembling lips into order before she asked for those Saville Street letters ; but she did not say to herself that it was longing for news of home that agitated her. She had believed such excuses hitherto, but she knew now that she should never be able to delude herself again with her old devices. Something in Madelon's talk, or in her own thoughts since — or was it the nightingale's songs or the breath of the sweet evening? — had brought strange revelations and stirrings of heart. Something at all events had torn the veil away that had hidden the secret so long. She might have to hide it from every one's knowledge down in the darkest corner of her heart for all her life long. She determined so to hide it carefully, but the knowledge would always be there. She would never be able to deny again the understanding of her own feelings that had come to her at the entrance of the pine-wood that evening.

A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.: CHAPTER XX. CHAPTER XXI. CHAPTER XXII.

Reeves, Marian C L; Read, Emily

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A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS.*

BY MARIAN C. L. REEVES AND EMILY READ.

Authors of "Ingramisco," "Wearithorne," "Old Martin Boscawen's Jest," "Aytoun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX. (CONTINUED.)

Presently, through the hush, is heard the wakening of the morning breeze among the far-off pines. Slowly through the mists the skies begin to flush, the floating clouds throw their golden linings eastward, the golden portals of the east unfold, and the fiery chariot passes through.

The whole heavens are aglow in gold and crimson clouds, that flare upon the rising wind, and wave to and fro, like gorgeous draperies of the sun's triumphal march through the heavens; the bright folds hanging voluminous upon the mountain tops, and flinging down reflected glory on the lake below. Across it, a blood-red streak lies like a band on Mount Pilate, standing up distinct and isolated in its gloom against the skies, and one thinks of the legendary grave somewhere hidden in the mountain's recesses—the grave of the blood-stained soul whom neither the water which he vainly defiled in the judgment-hall, nor that of the lake where tradition holds he sought to find repose, could purify. Lake Zurich glimmers faint as moonlight within the northern horizon; the Rossberg stands up red and seared as though but lately scarred by its stupendous slide of earth; Mythen is veiled in amber vapors; and vaguer still retreat the mountains in Uri, until they are blending with the shadows in the valley of the Reuss. Yet farther off, there is a white cloud gleam of snowy Alps. A dozen watery mirrors, framed by crags or woods, flash back the splendor of the heavens. And the trembling mists retreating to the valleys, like phantom forms of water-sprite or Undine, waver to and fro, and flee before the sun.

But all this is when the sun has fairly risen; while he still is in the act, from a group standing somewhat apart, there goes up a low, half-suppressed matin-song of greeting, as the first golden shaft shoots above the horizon.

Such a clear, sweet voice; it makes a sensation among the scattered sight-seers, half hushed though it is. There is a low, quickly-checked murmur of admiration, a stir as if turning to see the singer—who is out of view, however, seated on a rock in the midst of her own party.

There is one among the more distant hearers who does not, indeed, join in the murmur of admiration at the first notes of that voice, but who has given a start of surprise, and a more searching glance around. And presently the gleam of recognition grows steadier in his eyes, although they have seen nothing familiar in the group which moment by moment becomes clearer to him, as the gray dawn glows into full sunrise.

It is a group not unlike some others there; a comfortable English mamma, with her two or three daughters, fresh-looking, but with toilets rather hasty than becoming, in the early morning light; a man or two, for whom the watcher had just now no attention to spare, and, a thought withdrawn from them, a girlish figure all in black, standing gazing out eagerly over the valleys, her clear profile and the yellow hair under the black shawl thrown carelessly over the head and held by one hand under the chin, every instant more and more distinct in the waxing light. The girl's deep mourning dress seems a blur upon the brightness of the day, and the wistful face—

But it is wistful no longer; it takes back, all in a moment, the sunny look which one can see is habitual to it. For just then, one of her party stoops to make a request of the unseen singer, who with the wild "tra la la" of Kücken's Happy Hunter, breaks the spell she had cast round her with her matin song, that through its waking gladness had a plaintive thrill.

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It is but a single verse of this she gives, however; she is turning, and looks with a half-deprecating gesture to some one, who is Geoffrey Forbes, standing below her. That is not his choice; she is aware that the wild gayety she has thrown into the air has rather broken the spell she has been holding him in. So she lets her voice fall, and she leans with one hand on the mossy rock which serves her for a seat, and gazes out as if absently, down over wooded mountain-sides and flushing lake below; while she sings in an undertone, with simple pathos, an old favorite of Geoffrey's. And

"the gray dawn is breaking,

The horn of the hunter is heard on the hill."

And there is, to Geoffrey's ear, still another reality than those; the suppressed feeling that thrills in Charlotte's voice, that softens her half-averted face, as she sings of parting.

The listless attitude, the pretty head thrown slightly back, the white cloudy wrap, falling away and disclosing the thick blonde plaits caught together in a seeming carelessness that is the very triumph of ante-sunrise negligence; the soft, pathetic, childlike face; the sweet voice thrilling almost sobbingly through the half-open rosebud of a mouth—

A strange pang, half pain, half pleasure, takes possession of Geoffrey. Parting? He knows well enough what thought of parting it is, that has stolen into the child's heart.

"Come, Charlotte!"

The call behind him breaks the spell with which the siren-voice was drawing him to her. He starts, and turns sharply from Charlotte on her rock, and joins the speaker, who is Delphine. He walks beside the small black figure toward the hotel.

For it is day upon the Righi; and more than the mists are taking flight before the sun. The different groups are dispersing, hurrying to the inn; some suddenly aware, under the increasing light upon the subject, of the unbecomingness of their attire; some yawning, and casting sleepy and discontented glances around them, shivering pinched and blue in the frosty atmosphere; others moving on with firm step and complacent air, as conscious of a duty performed. The cattle are lowing in the green pastures below, the stable-boys lazily going to their work, while from a window in marvelous proximity to the pointed, overhanging inn roof, beams a fair-haired maid, carrying on, as she airs her blankets and her linen, a stealthy flirtation with a gallant below, who sports the black leather small-clothes and white stockings, the scarlet vest and long blue open jacket, of the Schwyz canton. Underneath one of the balconies, a far-wandering Tyrolese peddler, his grave features looking national under the national cock-plume, is seizing Time by the forelock to display his store to the passing glance of

a Russian princess and her retinue, and the nearer view of a knot of German students in gay pedestrian dress. Out to them issues an appetizing odor through the open doorway, where mistress and maid are seen hurrying to and fro, with great bowls of goat's milk and of the country-made wine, and steaming wooden trenchers of oatmeal porridge, roast potatoes, and toasted cheese, with the usual accompaniments of stewed fruits.

The keen mountain air has made every one ready for breakfast; except, apparently, Charlotte, who lingers in the doorway, half perhaps in the belief that Geoffrey Forbes will turn and join her, half in a puzzled disappointment that he has not done so before, but has walked with Delphine to the inn. It was nothing to Delphine, of course, his doing so; but what mistake has Charlotte made?

"Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun—"

Charlotte pauses with a flush over that last word, in her thoughts. Has it come to that? She cannot answer the question to herself. She is not sure. But of this one thing she is sure; that if Geoffrey Forbes begins to fall into the habit of loving her—

She breaks off. The flush of triumph just tinting her cheeks, deepens into a hot burning blush. For she has turned and sees some one approaching towards her, out of the fringe of stragglers loitering toward the inn. This one quickens his pace as she turns.

The girl stands spell-bound for an instant, the blood burning in her face, her hands suddenly clasping, her parted lips quivering.

But some sound behind her startles her. She throws back a hurried glance over her shoulder. It is nothing. Only some stranger passing, hardly looking at her as he crosses toward the dining-room. He has given her a timely warning, nevertheless. This is not the best place for a meeting—as well keep out of the range of vision from the dining-room, where Geoffrey has taken Delphine.

So she trips forward with a little impetuous rush, and both hands extended to—

"Cyril!"

Cyril takes her hands in his, and shakes them heartily; rather more heartily than he might have done at home. A familiar face like Charlotte's is a bit of sunshine in a strange land, and so he tells her.

She looks up at him, glowing all the more.

"And how did you know we were here? Have you been to Berne? Were you coming to find us here?"

"Well, no—" he has to own. "I was intending to hunt you up at Berne; Aunt Margaret had

a host of commissions and messages for you through me; but I never thought of finding you here, and abroad at such an hour as this."

"O! Cyril—" with a gush of enthusiasm, putting her hand in his arm, and drawing him, as if for a better view, quite safely away from range of the dining-room windows; "O Cyril! how could you think I would have missed it? Was ever anything so glorious as that sunrise? If you could only just see the point we caught it from, down there! Such asweep of mountain and of sky, and the lake all aglow below."

"Suppose you show me the point of view now," he says, quietly, understanding her perfectly, but not unwilling to give her the word apart which she seems to desire. "But I confess, Charlotte," he adds, as they walk on together; "I did not know sunrises lay in your line. I thought you were sensible enough to share Lever's opinion upon early rising."

"Lever's opinion?"

"That it is a very prying piece of business to peep at the sun while he is rising, and at his toilet; and that your early riser betrays his consciousness of the impertinence, by his manner of sneaking indoors again when the sun has rubbed the clouds out of his eyes, and is ready for a good stare at him. But you haven't the grace to look ashamed, eh? and are not to be daunted by his sunship's fullest stare?"

Why should she be? She is as fresh and fair a picture under the morning light, as one would wish to see in the setting of the mountain-side rising around her. For by this time they have passed down from the mountain's brow, and are seated under a projecting rock that shields them from above. It is an excellent point of view, Cyril agrees with her, as he throws himself down on the green slope at her feet. The lake is blue and green and golden, far below, with the skies, the mountains, and the sunshine mirrored in it. It is an excellent point of view; but Cyril is turning from it, leaning on his elbow, looking up straight into Charlotte's face.

"What is Forbes doing here?"

She starts, and her color varies. Of course Cyril might have caught sight of him, though she had thought he might perhaps have just reached the mountain-summit; his name was not on the hotel books last night.

"You saw him? You have just come up?" she questioned in her turn.

"Only just in time for the sunrise. I caught sight of him then with your party. What is he doing here, Charlotte?"

"Doing?" The girl colors confusedly, less at the words than at the grave, fixed look which accompanies them. Then she recovers herself. "Doing the Righi. We chanced upon each other in the Lauterbrunnen, then at Berne; and as we were coming up with three or four English

friends from our hotel, Mr. Forbes agreed to join us."

"And how long does he continue to form one of your party?"

"Really—" with a touch of pardonable impatience; for in a tête-a-tête a pretty woman hardly expects one man to make another the topic of conversation—"Mr. Forbes has not made me his confidante as to times and seasons."

"But as to other things,"—Cyril breaks in upon her—"Forbes has made you his confidante, Charlotte? You understand how it stands between him and—Gertrude?"

She hesitates just a little; how much does Cyril himself understand? Then she answers:

"I think I know something of the situation."

"That he bound her, hand and foot, down there at Broomielaw," says Cyril, sternly, "to await his good pleasure, until the year was out; and that the year was out a week ago."

"O Cyril!" Charlotte faces him with a low cry of doubting surprise. "I am sure you must be mistaken. I cannot think you are right—unless Gertrude herself told you?"

"Gertrude herself told me," says Cyril, walking open-eyed into the snare her pretty incredulity spreads for him.

"You went down to see her after I left you at Grafton? And she told you she could not engage herself to you until after this year?"

"Of course I went down to see her, and equally of course she told me nothing of the kind," says Cyril, coolly. "She merely would not listen to me. She did not hold herself free to do so, being so bound."

"A vastly different matter!" mocks the girl.

"You are right, it is vastly different," is the quiet assent. "I do not mind telling you, Charlotte, I do not know that I have a hope—"

And then something like a sudden madness seizes on the girl. Geoffrey Forbes is her bird in the hand, she believes; she has only to put out her soft white fingers, and hold him fast. And yet, Cyril, who is free—Cyril, who is beyond her reach—if she could only reach him, only stretch out her hands after him, even though in so doing she let Geoffrey go!

"Cyril," she cries, flushed and quivering, not looking up at him, but blindly plucking at the mosses of the bank whereon she sits; "Cyril, what is it you are doing? Will you waste your life on a cold woman like that? Not know that you have a hope? Ah, Cyril, if she loved you, she could not leave you like that! She would have given you some glimmer of hope, just a word, a hint, a half-promise—that after this year was over—"

He interrupts her.

"That would make a mockery of her pledge. Of course she would not do that. Only—" he adds, bitterly—"if she had cared even a little

for me, would she have given that pledge? I ask myself the question; I cannot answer it."

She looked at him, her clear eyes shining, her fair face full of emotion.

"Any woman could answer it, Cyril. Never! when she knew you loved her; when she could not help knowing it. Cyril, Cyril, while there was any hope—*any* hope—what woman who loved you could bind herself!"

She stopped short there. Even while she speaks, she becomes conscious that she has lost his attention. He hears her words; but he is looking not at her, but absently out across the valley.

"Well," he says, slowly, in the pause that ensues; and if he speaks a little hoarsely, it is steadily, "it must be as it must. You may be right, you probably are right. But I shall go back and see for myself. There is no reason why I should keep away any longer, since Forbes is here."

"But he is going back"—she says it breathlessly; pantingly. "He is going back. He will, I know."

The man is far too much absorbed in the thought of the one woman, to heed all the subtle changes in another woman's voice. He has no eyes for her; it is as if he were looking back at Gertrude among the gorse in that Broomielaw moonlight which somehow has dimmed all other light for him. The morning sunshine is full on Charlotte's agitated face, but he knows nothing of it, does not even glance at her as he answers:

"Let him. Indeed, I wish you to tell him, Charlotte, what I say. We will start fair, but we must start from to-day; I consider that he has forfeited all his year's advantage by his week's delay. I have been lingering over here, keeping out of the way, because I believed he had gone back, and I had no right to interfere. But now—now—a fair field and no favor!" he cries, springing up and taking his alpenstock from the grass, as if he were setting forth at once upon his journey.

Charlotte's color all dies out. She sits gazing at him with wide dilated eyes. He puts his hand out to her, standing below her as he is.

"So you will tell him, Charlotte. I am off; and besides, I have no fancy for meeting him just now. Tell him I go to take the first steamer at Havre. He has time to do likewise; and if we chance to encounter each other as fellow-travelers, why we need be none the worse friends, I suppose, because we are of the same mind there at Broomielaw."

Charlotte does not give her hand; instead she catches his arm with both her hurried, trembling hands.

"Cyril, what are you doing? She does not love you, she will never love you as—"

The voice dies in a gasp, for he is looking at

her now. Not fully understanding, even now: he is thinking of Gertrude's eyes instead.

"Perhaps she will not," he says, slowly. "Well, I am not the only man who has done without love. And she is the one woman in the world to me."

That last sentence brings back the blood to Charlotte's cheeks and lips. She looks at him with her eyes glittering; she puts her hands in his.

"Good-bye, then; and good speed!"

"What, above your friend Forbes?"

There is a meaning in his eyes now, as when first he asked her, "What is Forbes doing here?" But she keeps her upward glance steady, as she says, lightly:

"Oh, I thought you said a fair field and no favor; so I may wish the same to him."

"Do so." The ring in his voice is cheerful, even glad; there is not in it too much fear to put his fate to the touch. At least he starts fair now; and so he grasps Charlotte's hand rather more closely than he would if Geoffrey Forbes were not "doing the Right" with her; and he turns, and she sees him swinging his long staff lightly as he strikes into a downward foot-path which presently takes him round a crag, out of her sight.

Out of her sight. She sinks low on the moss again; she flings her arms up with a wild, despairing gesture on the bank above her, and bows her head down on them, covering her face; and then she breaks into deep, voiceless sobs, that shake her like the passionate crying of a child.

It is a full half-hour later that she is found there. The passionate torrent of grief and anger has stormed itself out; the pretty shoulders are yet quivering with sobs; the fair face is wet and flushed with tears, as she lifts it hurriedly at that step beside her. Can Cyril have returned?

But it is Geoffrey—Geoffrey, who is as startled as she; as troubled at the sight of those tears, as she at the consciousness of them.

"Charlotte! what has grieved you so?"

He is not conscious that he has called her by her name thus, until something in her manner, in her sudden glance, makes him aware of it. He colors hotly, and she casts down her eyelashes, and begins in a shy fashion to plait the border of her moist handkerchief with trembling fingers. Her color, too, deepens excitedly, for now the die must be cast: she has lost Cyril; shall she win or lose this man? It all depends—she says to herself—it all depends upon her steady hand just at this moment.

Yet her nerves are quivering with pain. But she must brace herself. It does not work against her that her voice is far from steady, as she answers:

"I—it is nothing; only—it is natural, I suppose, where one has been over happy—it is just a silly fancy that—the sunshine cannot last."

The busy little hands are still trembling at their task. Geoffrey has thrown himself beside her, and he puts his firm hand over the two.

"My little friend does not weep over fancies; there is some real trouble; she must let me help her."

Then the pretty red lip trembles again; the tender voice cries out with a childish sob in it:

"How can you help me? You are going away presently, and—"

"But I am not going away," he says, still speaking as he might to a hurt child.

"Not going away!" It is as if the sunlight flashed out in an April sky, the smile that gleams in her eyes. And then—the tears are very ready to fall still, after the long weeping—they fill up and overflow, and glitter in the sunshine on her lashes as she drops them, and says, breathlessly:

"Ah, but you will go; and then I—"

She breaks off, and snatches her hands from his clasp, and covers her flushed face with them.

And Geoffrey—

Geoffrey looks at her a moment as if thunderstruck. It is true, then; and he has hurt her so; he, to whom she has been so gentle and so kind.

Kind! Will another woman love him so? Not Gertrude; never Gertrude. But this child, whom he has taken off her guard, from whom he has surprised this unconscious confession?—

The drooping figure—the fair bowed head—the flushing face—that sob—

An arm steals around the figure; a hand is drawing down the two small hands.

"Charlotte, little one, if you will keep me by you, I will never go."

And then the face hides itself, crimson with shame, upon his shoulder.

But has she not delivered Cyril's message, at least after a fashion? She has spoken of Geoffrey's going, and he has chosen to stay.

CHAPTER XXI.

"La gloire aisee

D'entrer dans un cœur de toutes parts ouvert."

"Number seven—yes, I think number seven will do; and the state-room I looked at first. You may consider them engaged. And the steamer sails—when, exactly?"

What answer the steward makes, as he gathers his state-room keys together in a bunch, is quite lost on his questioner, who, in turning, has caught sight of a party coming down the saloon with shawl-straps and traveling-bags, as if about to leave the steamer. A French maid bringing up the rear, laden with the greater part of the light burdens; and, glancing back to speak to her—a sparkling little "golden blonde," in those "mitigated affliction" weeds which are only becoming

and not dismal, and which make all the brighter from the contrast the eager, speaking blue eyes, the soft, rose-tinted face, the red lips just parting in a smile. The stranger standing apart at the other end of the long saloon, half smiles to herself, unconsciously; then her eyes fall on the foremost of the party.

They are not fronting her, but she can see them plainly in the mirror opposite. The tall, dark, grave-looking man, is waiting in half-suppressed impatience at the repeated detention behind; his companion, upturning a fair, childishly fresh face, as with a little air of possession she clasps her free, ungloved left hand over the one already in his arm, is making some smiling speech, at which he does not smile; and just then, glancing aside into the mirror as they walk on thus, she stands still with a violent start.

He, too, stops with another involuntary movement of impatience. Any more forgotten parcels to return for? But that startled, frightened gaze of hers—

He follows it; and there in the mirror the three face one another: the two standing arm in arm, and the quiet, slender figure in black, looking at them steadily out of the state-room doorway opposite.

"Gertrude!"

It is Charlotte who utters the name unawares, in a breathless, dismayed sort of way, and drops the hand which she has clasped over the one in Geoffrey's arm. Geoffrey for his part does not speak. A gray hue overspreads his face, and he stands gazing into the mirror, making no movement to turn and meet Gertrude herself, instead of that semblance of hers. It is only thus in the mirror that he looks at her; his eyes, after that, never once lift themselves to the level of hers; for he must turn now—Gertrude, after the briefest pause, has come forward, and holds out her hand,

"You took me by surprise, Charlotte; I did not know you were on your way home—and Cousin Geoffrey. Odd that you should be coming and I going on the same steamer, is it not? I need not ask what sort of a voyage you had over, for you look so well."

Perhaps she is talking just a little at random, for at this instant Charlotte certainly does not look well, but pale and frightened and shrinking, as she stands there under Gertrude's eyes, with a vague feeling that the cabin-floor might yawn and swallow her up, and no harm done. Not that Charlotte could not have held her own well enough if she had had a moment's warning; but, taken thus at unawares—

The hand fallen at her side makes a covert motion to hide itself in the folds of her dress; but not before Gertrude's eyes have been drawn to it. Perhaps they would not have been, but for the frightened, furtive look on Charlotte's face, which accompanies that motion; but as it is, Gertrude

does glance down in time to catch the glitter of a gold ring on the third finger. It is while Gertrude is still holding out her own hand in greeting; and though the blood forsakes her face, and then flies back as swiftly as it went, she does not withdraw the hand, into which, as if constrained to do so, Charlotte puts her right one, dropping Geoffrey's arm.

"I am to welcome home two cousins instead of one, am I not?" says Gertrude, very quietly and steadily. And then; "Pray make me known, Charlotte, to your sister; this is your sister, Mrs. Burger?"

Delphine coming up at this moment, in her unconsciousness of anything like a scene, is a wonderful relief to the three. Charlotte takes courage, and manages the introduction creditably enough; and while Delphine and Gertrude are exchanging a cheerful commonplace or two, Geoffrey also has recovered himself; the more rapidly that Charlotte is no longer on his arm, but the two are standing apart.

How easy Gertrude is, how cool and unconcerned, Geoffrey Forbes is saying to himself, in a stern sort of indignation; when, with a start and a guilty glance across at Charlotte, he recollects himself.

As for Charlotte, it is not often that she is not equal to the occasion; she certainly is now. It is but the first surprise that has disconcerted her; she has already so completely gone back to the old footing with Gertrude, that when Delphine presently makes the move to go ashore, Charlotte proposes that they shall drive Gertrude where she is staying. It is an indirect question; even Charlotte's temerity does not carry her so far as to push inquiry into Gertrude's plans, or to ask how it is she happens to be going abroad. The truth is, in this last month or two there has been very little question as to Gertrude with Charlotte or Forbes; it was easier just to suppose her still at Broomielaw. As for the depreciation of her little stock, which left her almost without income, they knew nothing of that.

Charlotte would have done better not to make her offer; for, for the first time, Gertrude shows a little hauteur of manner. Many thanks, but she has not quite finished her business, and would prefer not to detain them; so good-morning.

There is nothing for it but to take the steady, slim, gloved hand she offers, first to Charlotte, then to Mrs. Burger, and to Cousin Geoffrey in his turn. It is very cold and listless when it reaches his; until she glances up and meets his haggard eyes, that dare not ask her forgiveness. Then her color heightens, and she shakes hands with him in her old, cordial fashion. Does he fancy she regrets?

"You should have let me give you my best wishes beforehand, Cousin Geoffrey," she says to him in the clear, low voice which Charlotte hears;

"but I hope they are in time yet; they are sincere enough, for the sake of the old, old days."

What can he answer her? And so they part; but Charlotte has fallen back to take her shawl from Babet, and it is Delphine and Geoffrey who walk on in front together.

It is some ten minutes later when Gertrude comes out alone across the gangway. She is not walking in any absent, preoccupied manner, but with a light, free step, giving dainty heed to her dress, gathered up in one hand, as she threads her way among boxes and barrels heaped on the wharf, and with her other hand keeps the sun-umbrella up over her head.

Some one leaning against a pile of freight, rather out of her path, and watching the gangway, starts out of his moody attitude, and comes forward and joins her.

"You ought not to come down here by yourself, Gertrude. Mrs. Baldwin ought to know better than to let you."

Gertrude looks round with a startled exclamation:

"Cyril!" And then, blushing more vividly than she is aware: "Mrs. Baldwin is very kind and considerate, but of course she does not engage to pay me three hundred a year to play Mamselle Helpless. She expects her companion to assist her in these small ways, and I hope to be as good as a courier before we half finish our European tour. No, I won't take your arm; I have my dress and parasol to take care of, you see; but you may pilot me safely through these drays, since you happen to be here."

"I don't 'happen to be here,'" he answers, walking on at her side. "I have been to Mrs. Baldwin's to see you, and was told where you were. Gertrude"—he says, abruptly—"have you read the morning papers, and did you see the list of passengers arrived by this steamer? But I need not ask, or you would not be here."

Now Gertrude thanks the instinct of pride which prevented her taking his arm. She has to fall back an instant, for a wagon laboring past; when she is beside him again, she looks at him quietly and says:

"You are wrong. I would have come all the same, if Mrs. Baldwin had asked me. I have not seen the list of arrivals. I have, however, seen some of the arrivals themselves. Cousin Geoffrey and his wife were still on board when I came down, and I had an opportunity to offer my congratulations."

She says it with a queer little ring in her voice, half laughter, half tears; but the tears win the day in her eyes, which she lifts frankly to Cyril.

"I am sorry for Cousin Geoffrey. It is against his nature to do anything not utterly straightforward and open. And Charlotte—unless, indeed, she manages to hoodwink him to the end"—

"I must say, Gertrude, I think you put the

CHAPTER XXII.

D. Pedro.—“Look, here she comes.”
Bene.—“Will your grace command me
any service to the world's end.”

“Is there any danger?”

“Danger, Mrs. Burger? Danger of what?”

Dr. Mackenzie is conscious that he is speaking sharply, and that it is not polite thus to repeat one's words. But somehow this dainty little lady in her silks and furbelows irritates him. To most men, she would have been as a gleam of sunshine in that dingy doorway; to Mahlon Mackenzie she is a blot—something against nature.

“Is there any danger of contagion?” explains Delphine, nestling her hands comfortably in her muff, as she looks up at him standing on the doorstep above her. Just now, the two seem to be quite alone together; for the disheveled woman in the adjoining doorway has left off staring at the dainty apparition which displeases Dr. Mackenzie, and has carried her fretting baby indoors; and the group of small ragamuffins industriously employed in damming up the gutter, have carried the scene of their operations farther afield. So there is nothing left, in the narrow, high-walled alley, to distract the attention of these two from each other. Delphine Burger, it is true, if she had lifted her glance to the windows overhead, might have caught glimpses of a white, frightened face, shrinking back behind the half-drawn white curtain, yet staring down at Delphine in a spell-bound way. But Delphine looks up no further than to Dr. Mackenzie, as she adds:

“There often is, in fevers, is there not?”

“Not if one keeps out of the way of them. You are quite safe in the fresh air. If you nursed a patient, indeed, and constantly breathed the atmosphere of a small, stifling room, I would not be so sure of there being no risk. But, as it happens, there is no fever here; and nursing, I presume, is not your intention.”

Delphine laughs.

“I only came to see if anything is needed. You doctors are said to order impossible things for the poor.”

“Unfortunately, we find a cheap diet seldom nourishing,” says Dr. Mackenzie, drily.

“Then I can send something, and the more nourishing the better. I have some wine of fabulous age, which I would be glad to give your sick when they need it.”

Delphine speaks as if Dr. Mackenzie's acceptance would be a personal favor to her, and the gift is far too valuable to his patients for him to refuse.

“You must let me know whenever you need any. I suppose I may send a few bottles here. And, Dr. Mackenzie,” adds Delphine, putting out her hand to him, “if you would come to my house on Thursday evenings, I can promise you would meet some pleasant people.”

burden just now on the wrong shoulders. It was Forbes who owed it to be especially straightforward.”

“Stay, Cyril; Cousin Geoffrey did not owe it to me to be, or to do, or to leave undone anything. It was all over between us when he went abroad last year. Only, I had promised him that for a year, or until he gave me some sign that he had gotten the better of his disappointment, I would not—would not!”

All at once she is aware of the possible inference from her words. She breaks off in the hottest confusion, while Cyril supplies eagerly:

“Would not listen to me? Gertrude, take my arm; it is impossible to say anything while we are being jostled apart at every instant.”

He speaks rather authoritatively, but Gertrude makes no movement to obey, letting an old huckster-woman thrust herself and her basket in between them just then. Afterwards, when they are walking on together again,

“Take my arm, Gertrude,” he repeats.

But she looks straight up at him. She is a little paler than she was, but her eyes have a steady light in them. “You are very kind, Cyril. But I have no desire to be taken care of, either by Cousin Geoffrey, or by you in his default.”

“Gertrude!” It is almost angrily that he turns on her. “I thought you women were quicker at understanding us. I thought you would at least give me credit for being honest, and not trying to cheat you with a sham”—

Certainly he upbraids her under difficulties. A couple of shouting urchins dive in between them at that moment. When they come together again, Gertrude, without looking at him, and with her downcast face a rosy red, puts her hand gently in his arm.

It is all the answer that he asks just then. Afterwards, when they are parting at Mrs. Baldwin's door, he says to her:

“But you cannot give up your European trip, Gertrude. I'll make a better guide than your Mrs. Baldwin, I promise you.”

“Oh, are you going to offer her your services as courier? How charming that will be!”

He silences the mocking voice by a glance up at her as she stands on the steps above him. Though he says, responsive to her blush:

“We will give Mrs. Baldwin the opportunity of trying the steady person between whom and you she hesitated, you remember; and you and I will sail from New York instead. Betty shall come up from Broomielaw to give us her blessing; I believe she has given it to me long ago,” he adds, laughing, “even in the days when you would give me nothing, not even a ray of hope.”

“How could I give you what I had not myself?” she asks softly. And then, before he could add one eager word, the servant opened the door to her, and she vanished within.

Mackenzie shakes hands, and thanks her for her offer, but purposely says nothing of her invitation, which he has no idea of accepting. He does not even offer to go with her to the end of the alley, nor even watch her on her way, but turns back into the house, and upstairs to his patient, thinking hardly of the distribution of the good things of this life; for Delphine shows that she gives of her superfluity, and the giving costs her nothing.

Delphine has her thoughts too, as she walks on, slowly picking her way through the mud. They are not of the hard conditions of life, nor of the poverty around her. "I wonder if he will come. If the wine does not bring him, I don't know what will; it was a sort of inspiration, that offer. He certainly does not know how to receive a favor; and really I don't care whether he comes or not. Only, Louis de Lille hinted, when I told him I intended to have this wonderful new doctor at my house, that there were some things which even a pretty woman could not do. And yet, if I choose, I could. If I put on a dress as ugly as that of a Sister of Charity, and nursed his patients, he would follow me like a dog. It is always these Samsons that have some secret as to their strength, and if you discover it, you can make them as other men. But then, I have no desire to risk catching a fever, for a mere caprice."

Meanwhile, her Samson goes his way unsnared upstairs, and raps on a door at a landing rather high up. When he has no answer, he lifts the latch and enters.

The little white nest of a room, which would have struck a stranger as oddly out of keeping with its neighborhood, is familiar enough to Dr. Mackenzie to attract no attention now; he turns at once to the bed, where he will find his patient. And then he becomes aware that she is not, as he had supposed, the sole occupant of the room at this moment.

Yonder, at the window, crouching down, veiled by the curtain, her two hands clenched with nervous strength upon the sill, kneels a young woman so intently gazing out from the mere loop-hole view she has left herself, that she does not hear him enter. It is not until he speaks to her:

"Miss Ellis—"

She turns then. She starts to her feet with a quick, gasping breath, almost a cry. Dr. Mackenzie comes a step forward, hastily; there is such a white terror in her face, and she puts out her two hands with a shrinking gesture, cowering back against the window. And then, when she sees who it is, she tries to recover herself, and fails, and breaks into a passion of tears, covering her face, and bowing her head down on the arm of the chair into which she sinks.

Mahlon Mackenzie looks on for a long moment dismayed. He has seen distress enough in

his time, and has striven to soothe it; but what can he say to this? He cannot understand it. Was she watching the fine lady picking her dainty way down the alley, and did some pang of envy—

Envy? Even while he says it to himself he knows it is not true. It is no such mean and shallow feeling which convulses the beautiful dark face, seen an instant and then hidden from his view. Some memory of brighter days, perhaps, recalled by the gay little figure.

But even that, though it is easy to believe that the girl has seen brighter days, fails to explain the breathless—fear, was it?—in her dilated eyes. He perceives that she is making a brave struggle with her emotion; her slight hand clenches more and more firmly on the arm of her chair. And something comes just then to help her. It is a laugh; a low, chuckling, vacant sort of laugh, from the bed. At that the young woman lifts her head, first with an anxious glance in the direction of the sound, and then with a timid one up at Dr. Mackenzie.

But she need not have been afraid of disturbing his patient yonder. It was not her low sobbing, which called forth that strange comment. The sick girl is lying with her white cheek turned aside on the white pillow, the glassy pale-blue eyes staring in a faintly pleased way at a gay bunch of chrysanthemums in a painted vase on the table beside her. There is a plate also, heaped with grapes, and an orange which makes another bit of vivid color on which the pleased eager eyes dwell. A gaily-colored picture-book lies open on the coverlet, under one of the wasted, but large and coarsely-made hands resting spread out there. Dr. Mackenzie is more than ever struck by the difference between the two occupants of the room, when the young woman whom he has called Miss Ellis, after that one timid, hesitating, half-questioning glance at him, comes forward to the bedside. He looks from the one to the other, secure in his scrutiny, in that Miss Ellis is not heeding him, with her dark eyes riveted upon that upturned face.

Whatever difference there may have been in the age of the two, disease has nearly equalized it, making the invalid, haggard and worn, appear far older than she ought to be; an impression deepened by the heavily moulded features, with their blank of expression. Except for that strange blank, she might once have had a certain comeliness of the blond German peasant type; and still the skin is clear, and shows the blue veins in the sunken temples, back from which waves the abundant fair hair, lying in smoothly braided tresses across the pillow. The lips are parted over the white teeth in a vacant half smile, which at least has no pain in it.

"She does not suffer," says the other girl, suddenly, watching her. And then, turning sharply,

"Dr. Mackenzie, are you sure, sure that you are not mistaken—that there is nothing to be done for her? Nothing which money—a great deal of money—can do?" she adds in an urgent almost whisper, knotting her hands together, paling again, raising her eyes to him with again that shrinking dread dilating them.

At another moment, Mahlon Mackenzie might have smiled at that parenthesis uttered by this girl in her cheap stuff gown, standing in the midst of her poor, bare room. But now he does not smile; he only says, gently:

"There is nothing that money can do for her. But I will tell you what I will do for *you*, Miss Ellis; I will bring one of our leading physicians to see the case, and to give you his opinion."

"Could he help her?" she asks, looking up at him with grave appeal.

"In this life-long disease of spine and brain, there is no remedy but death, which is merciful, and gradually coming to relieve her. Still, it may be some satisfaction to you to have other advice."

"I trust you," she says, simply. "And Gretel does not like strangers; and if they can do her no good, why should they come, just to distress her?"

"Only if they would be any comfort to you," he tells her. "Well, then I will say no more about it; for indeed nothing could do more than your devotion—"

She puts up her hand to stop him, with a hurried gesture of pain.

"My devotion!" and then, more calmly: "Dr. Mackenzie, if she had had a quite different home—money, friends, everything—if she had had all these two years, three years ago?"

"They could not have saved her. They could not even have made her happier than you have. Do you not know that? My dear child," he says, putting his hand gently upon her shoulder, as she hangs breathlessly upon his words—"rest content. If Providence has made her capacity for enjoyment so small that a flower, a bit of bright riband, a gaily-colored print, fill it to overflowing, why should you be sorry that you cannot give her more? You have fulfilled your duty to her nobly, whether it were given you to do, or whether you took it upon you out of sweet charity."

She has quailed under that word, shrinking away from him, glancing round her with again that agony of fear in her eyes. "Charity!"—the bitter cry breaks from her unawares.

Then Dr. Mackenzie takes his resolve.

He has been attending the girl Gretel here, for more than two months now, and has been interested in this other case, not down in his books, not within the reach of his pharmacopœia, but which evidently to him needs treatment. And yet, for all her shy friendliness, he knows no more about it than at first. Not that, apparently, Miss Ellis has anything to conceal; he knows that for

the last two years she has been living at this lodging-house, to which she brought Gretel; and her small table near the window, strewn with her working-materials, at which he has often seen her busy, her attention divided between her task and her patient, makes no mystery of her occupation, which is that of coloring photographs, or touching up the penciled heads beginning to catch the popular fancy in the photograph galleries, for which she is employed. Yet Dr. Mackenzie feels some mystery about her in her isolation; for he sees for himself that she is so utterly different from the girl Gretel, for whom she called him in, that it is hardly possible she could be of the same blood. If, then, he could be of service to her?

The hope justifies him in breaking through the silence she has wrapt about her like a veil. He speaks, perhaps somewhat abruptly:

"You must forgive me, if what I have to say trenches upon the reserve you have chosen. So far as I can tell, you have no other friend near you; and I am, if you will permit me to say so, too good a friend to stand by without a remonstrance, and see you sacrifice yourself like this. Whatever reason you may have had for coming to this poor creature and giving your life up to her, in a few weeks, or months at farthest, a merciful death is drawing near to relieve her, and to release you. I do not understand your reason; I do not ask to understand it; but if you have left your home and natural friends, whether from duty, or perhaps a youthful and mistaken generosity—"

It is the anguish in her face which interrupts him at that word. Her lips move for an instant without speech: then she says:

"I will not deceive you: I have been that child's most cruel enemy. Nothing that I could do for her, were I to work my fingers to the bone for her, were I to watch beside her night and day upon my knees—nothing that I could do would expiate. And natural friends! If you had been unnatural, cruel, working terrible, irreparable hurt to the one on earth to whom you owed most duty—"

The girl standing there before him with her pure, clear, noble face, flushed and impassioned in her hurried speech, how could he link with her the thought of such evil-doing as she spoke of? And yet her deadly earnestness.

"Irreparable?" is all he finds to say. He is sorry he has said it, the instant after, seeing how she shudders as if it were her doom.

She just repeats the word, and answers him. He turns away from the sight of her white face, and walking to the window, stands there looking out, before he speaks again:

"If I am wrong, and you do not exaggerate your misdoing, still, remember that when one repents—"

"But I do not repent," says Elliot, very low.

Her thoughts, in that pause before he spoke, had passed from her father to this Gretel Burger, whose story she has kept back for Delphine's sake.

Mahlon turns round and looks at her in an amazed way. He was not prepared for that steady assertion. In all his experience with sinners—and an earnest worker among the poor in his profession has almost as wide experience as any preacher of the gospel—confession and lip-repentance at least, were well-nigh synonymous. And that this woman, who has seemed to him a sort of lay Sister of Charity, should calmly declare, as she is doing :

"I do not repent. If it were all to go over again, I know that I should do the same. Do I try to undo it, when a word, a breath—"

She breaks off—what is she saying, what clue is she giving unawares? She has been bending over the bed while speaking, putting to the sick girl's lips the cool glass of water which the inarticulate murmur and the wandering eyes appeared to ask; and now, as she sets back the glass, she sinks on her knees at the bedside, merely because she is trembling so that her limbs fail under her. She is not praying; no thought of prayer is in her heart. But how should Mahlon know that, as he looks upon her in that humble attitude, her face hidden against Gretel's pillows? He turns, and goes out of the room quietly and reverently, as in his Master's presence, who draws nigh to hear.

No thought of prayer is in her heart. Elliot is no mocker; she does not go into the temple courts and lay her gifts upon the altar, remembering what her fellow-creature had said against her.

"First be reconciled to thy brother."

But Elliot has spoken the truth. No thought of reconciliation, implying restitution, is in her mind. Remorse is there; despair, abhorrence of herself, outcast of the just God; a shuddering pity for the helpless creature on whose every need, whose every childish whim, she waits as though she, Elliot, were not her cruel enemy. For Elliot has never tried to shut her eyes to her own evil-doing, after that wretched night when she stole away from her home, driven forth half by the horror of the harm she never doubted she had wrought to her father, half by the dread of what might further befall this helpless Gretel Burger. For the German-looking letter from Baltimore, which had come to her through the post-office that evening, had for the first time made all the facts of the case clear to Elliot. The mother herself had told so little; she had not said that her child was a hopeless imbecile, with a spinal disease which must grow worse; and it came as a terrible revelation of her own cruelty to Elliot, who had all that while had been striving to forget. The letter was from the boarding-house keeper, in whose care Gretel had been left, and

should have been written a year ago, the woman explained, but that she had mislaid the bit of paper on which Frau Burger had, before she went away, set down where she was going, so that she might be sent to if anything happened to the child. From this statement it went on to blame the mother who could thus for a whole year desert her child and throw her upon strangers, more of a burden as she was growing every day, no longer able to sit up now—though the dear heaven knows, the writer added, she had never grudged the poor one her bit or sup; but her own family cares were heavy on her, and Frau Burger did a grievous wrong to her. It was this letter which had sent Elliot in desperation to her father for money, that spring evening more than two years ago; and it was this letter that had been her guide when she went to seek the child Gretel, to take her away to herself, to care for her, to work for her through many a hard and struggling month, to give her life up to her.

But confess the wrong she has done her, and throw reproach on Delphine's name, and bring the tears of shame into those bonnie eyes she watched from her window laughing up into Dr. Mackenzie's?—Elliot will not do it, she is saying to herself, there on her knees.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A COVENANT WITH DEATH.

A NARRATIVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AN UNLAID GHOST."

To E. P. T.

"So little payment for so great a debt."

CHAPTER I.

"O Death in Life! the days that are no more."

It would have been no surprise to his friends had Loyd Morton speedily followed his young wife to the grave. Their brief union had been a very communion of souls—one of those rare experiences in wedlock for jealousy of which Destiny may almost be pardoned. Small wonder, therefore, that his grief was of that speechless description which "whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break." For a time it was thought he could not survive his dumb despair; or, if he did, that melancholia would claim him an easy victim. It is needless to affirm that he escaped the wreck of both life and reason, since the existence of this chronicle attests so much.

The manner of his escape does not appear; though it was astutely surmised, and perhaps with some show of probability, that, being an expert and practitioner in disorders of the nervous system, he healed himself, albeit physicians of experience may entertain contrary views concerning the feasibility of the feat. At all events, he came forth to face his world again, a sad, pallid being induced with indomitable perseverance and fortitude; more than ever zealous in the discharge of his engagements; as never before devoted to his profession. But a sympathetic eye could not fail to detect the feverish abandonment of self, the positively voracious hungering for constant activity, which were in themselves a pathetic commentary upon the frame of mind in which his bereavement had left him.

He had become the wraith-like semblance of the original young Doctor Morton, once so buoyant, so pampered by favoring Fate—in a word, so worthy of righteous envy. Alas! what eternities to him were those hours of lonely seclusion when there were no visits to pay and no clients to awaken the sepulchral echoes of his house with summons at the bell—dark hours of nothingness, blank eras of forlorn distress!

Yet, let there be no suspicion that Loyd Morton's was an unmanly grief; it was no more a lachrymose distemper than it was a stubborn setting of his face against his lot. His sorrow was far too genuine to be self-conscious, and, if he brooded in his despair, it was simply because something had gone out of his life infinitely more precious than life itself; something that he would have given his life to recover, since absolute annihilation seemed to him preferable to this existing condition of death in life.

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His love had been a first, all-absorbing passion; it had introduced into his hitherto prosaic existence a light and genial warmth that had set the soft glow of the rose upon its humblest attributes; it had afforded him an object to live for, a goal worthy his ambition, and had filled the void of indefinable longing with that sense of completeness which is ever the result of a perfect alliance between sympathy and sincerity of purpose.

He had met his affinity during his student-days; had wooed, and won, and married her in the first flush of that youthful affection. Possibly the old-time shades of Stuttgart lent a quaint and fascinating glamour to the courtship; but, if glamour there were, it became the permanent atmosphere that hallowed their marital relations when the work of life began at home, stripped of all romantic association. Indeed, their honeymoon never waned to setting; it simply suffered total eclipse.

It was fortunate that, at the period of his overwhelming bereavement, the young physician chanced to be in vogue. American nervous systems are notoriously more subject to disorder than any on the face of the earth; and he who ministers successfully to, or rather deciphers cleverly, these occult riddles of the human anatomy of the West, is not only an exceedingly busy, but an eminently fortunate, man. Day and night he is at the beck and call of those whose unstrung nerves require tuning; while, if his patience is forced to pay the penalty of his devotion, the shade of Midas, by way of recompense, seems indefatigable in its superintendence of the filling of his coffers.

To repute and popularity had Loyd Morton attained in an exceptional degree; and, for the reason that a host of wayward nervous systems could not be induced to respect the season of his grief, he was fairly dragged out of his seclusion, and made to identify himself with the real or imaginary woes of his patients. And it was fortunate that it was so, since on this account, only in the solitude of those chambers, about which clung the memory of his lost one like a benison, had he opportunity to listen to the lament of his anguished heart. And the monotonous cry of that heart was ever, "Paula, Paula, Paula! My wife!"

Surely there could have been no rest for her soul if that wail of affliction penetrated the celestial sphere to the enjoyment of which her blameless life entitled her. Far from contributing to her repose, such grieving emphasis must have fettered her spirit to earth.

"I feel," he told himself at the close of his first year of widowhood, "as though I was environed by a sere wilderness, over whose trackless wastes I must trudge until I meet the ashy horizon and find the end. No ray of light, no star to twinkle hope; always these weeping clouds of grizzled pallor! Only one comfort is vouchsafed me—fatigue. Fortunately, fatigue means sleep, and sleep oblivion!"

Lost in dreary reverie, he sat by the window of his study one April evening, with the melancholy spring-tide gloaming about him. A nesting-bird twittered, and the scent of the sodden earth filtered in at the half-open casement.

Two years ago that day he had watched a German mother raise the bridal wreath from her daughter's brow, the happy ceremonial over, and had listened, as in a rapturous dream, to the words: "She is taine. Take her; but, oh! my son, guard, guide, and cherish her, for the sake of her fond mother, when the boundless sea shall roll between us!"

One year agone to an hour, and in the dismal after-glow of a rainy sunset, he had stood beside the open grave, his agonized heart-throbs echoing the wet clods as they fell upon the casket that contained the last fragment

of his shattered hopes—his broken idol screened from his yearning gaze by hideous glint of plate and polished wood.

Nuptial and burial rites celebrated with the self-same ghastly flowers within a twelve-month! A wreath for a bride, a chaplet for a corpse, fragrant tokens for the quick and the dead—and so the chapter ended!

The monotonous drip of the eaves, the fitful sough of the miasmatic wind, the odor of the humid garden-plot, the blood-red hem of the leaden clouds whose skirts trailed languidly along the western horizon—all, all so vividly recalled that grievous hour of sepulture, so painfully accentuated its anniversary, that, in very desolation of soul, he exclaimed,

“My God! how unutterably lonely and wretched I am! What would I not give for one word, one glimpse, for the slightest assurance that we are not doomed to eternal separation; that the closing of the eyes in death does not signify instant annihilation!”

The sudden clang of the office-bell interrupted his utterance and almost deprived him of breath, so significant seemed the punctuation to his thought. He rose hastily and, contrary to his custom, preceded the servant through the hall.

Upon throwing open the outer door, he found himself confronted by a woman, closely veiled and clothed in black, her tall and slender figure standing forth in strong relief against the lurid gloom of the evening.

For an instant silence prevailed, save for the retreating footsteps of the servant as he returned to his quarters.

“You are Doctor Loyd Morton,” the woman began in a tone low yet perfectly distinct, a tone of assertion rather than inquiry. “Can you give me a few moments’ consultation?”

“These are my office-hours, madam,” he replied, a feeling of mingled curiosity and repulsion taking possession of him.

“I know; but I am told that you are in great request. Shall we be undisturbed?”

“Quite so. Will you come in?”

He stepped aside and she entered, raising her veil as she did so, though the darkness of the hall prevented his determining what manner of countenance she wore. The twilight that penetrated the office through uncurtained windows, however, discovered a delicate, pale face framed in tendrils of soft chestnut hair and alight with eyes of the same indescribable tint. It was not a strictly beautiful face, according to the canons of beauty, yet it was one of those faces one glance at which invites another, until the spell of fascination claims the beholder.

Loyd Morton had had impressionable days, but for obvious reasons they were at an end. Still, he was interested; and the better to study his visitor he was about to strike a match for the purpose of lighting a lamp, when the woman, with swift divination of his intent, exclaimed:

“I prefer the twilight,” adding; “I shall not detain you long.”

Morton hesitatingly replaced the unignited match, and glanced at his visitor in a manner eloquent of his desire to learn the object of her call.

She noted the silent interrogation in her keen way, and, after a swift survey of the shadowy apartment, continued:

“I believe you assured me that we should be undisturbed.”

“I did, madam.”

“We are not alone, however.”

“I beg your pardon; we are quite alone.”

“No, no! there is a presence here beside our own—a presence so real, so powerful, as to be almost tangible. Oh, I understand that look of quick

intelligence in your eyes and that wan smile lurking about your lips. You think me deranged; but I can easily prove to you that I am not."

She had spoken with unexpected fervor, and now paused, pressing her slender hand upon her eyes, as if to compose herself.

"I did not think to encounter one of my so-called crises here," she resumed presently; "but it is just as well, since by this means you can better form some diagnosis of my case. Do—do I afford you any hint? Perhaps, though, I do not interest you?"

His unresponsive silence seemed to dispirit her, for her eager eyes fell dejectedly.

"On the contrary, you interest me very much," he answered gently. Will you be seated, and give me some information regarding your symptoms?"

She sank into the depths of a reclining-chair that faced the western window, while Morton seated himself directly before her.

The blood-red ribbon below the rainy clouds had faded and shrunk to a filament of pale olive that gave forth a weird, crepuscular glimmer. Objects as white as the pallid face among the cushions seemed to absorb the sensitive light and to grow yet more spectral through its aid.

"First of all," remarked the young doctor, "kindly give me your name and such information as you please concerning your manner of life."

The voice that replied was low to drowsiness.

"My name is Revaleon—Margaret Revaleon. I am an Englishwoman by birth, and have been for three years the wife of a Canadian. Until my child was born I enjoyed, if not robust, at least excellent, health. For the past year I have lost ground; while these crises, as I call them, have debilitated and depressed me. Thinking a change would benefit me, I have come to visit friends in this neighborhood. In the hope of relief from my peculiar ailment, which I believe to be purely nervous, I have sought you out, attracted by your fame as an expert in disorders of the nervous system. Ah, doctor," she added, struggling against the lethargy that oppressed her, "do not tell me that I am incurable, since I have so much to live for!"

She seemed as ingenuous as a child; her unaffected manner being such as speedily wins its way to confidence. The sense of mingled repulsion and curiosity, which in the first moment she had exerted upon Morton, vanished, giving place to a feeling of genuine interest, perhaps concern.

"I see no reason for pronouncing the doom you dread, Mrs. Revaleon," he said; "not, at least, until you explain the 'peculiar ailment' you allude to."

Her eyes rested upon him with singular intentness—singular, because they appeared to lack speculation; that is to say, they were dilated, and luminous with a strange yellow light. At the same time it was evident that their regard was introspective, if speculative at all. Yet her reply followed with a full consciousness of the situation.

"I am unable to explain my malady," she said. "It consists in little more than what you see at this moment. If you cannot account for my present condition, it must continue a mystery to me."

He leaned forward and took her hands in his. They were icy cold, although they responded to his touch with an indescribable, nervous vibration.

"I have no trouble of the heart," she murmured, divining his suspicion; "I suffer this lowering of vitality only when in my present condition."

He released her hands and sat back in his chair, regarding her fixedly.

After a brief pause, he remarked,

"I must ask you to explain what you mean by your 'present condition.'"

"I mean, Dr. Morton, that, since you assure me that there is no presence in this room other than our own, I must possess some species of clairvoyance which my present condition induces. I assure you that there *is a third presence here*, that completely overshadows you! The consciousness of this fact freezes my very marrow and chills my being with the chill of death. It is by no means the first time that I have experienced these baleful sensations, or I should not have come to you for advice and counsel. Heaven knows I have no wish to be cognizant of these occult matters; but I am completely powerless to struggle against them. Ah, me!" she sighed wearily, "had I lived in the days of witchcraft, I suppose I should have been burned at the stake, despite my innocence."

Her voice sank to a whisper, and with its cadence her eye-lids drooped and closed; her breathing became sterterous, while her teeth ground each other with an appalling suggestion of physical agony, of which her body gave no evidence, being quiescent.

Startled though he was, Morton's first suspicion was that he was being made the victim of some clever imposture. This fancy, however, soon gave place to a belief that he was witnessing some sort of refined hysteria. Were the latter supposition the case, he felt himself equal to the emergency.

He leaned forward and placed his hands firmly upon the shoulders of the inanimate woman. "Enough of this, Mrs. Revaleon!" he exclaimed in a firm voice; "if I am to assist you, you must assist me! I command you to open your eyes!"

Not so much as a nerve vibrated in the corpse-like figure.

Aroused to a determination to thoroughly investigate the phenomenon, Morton quickly ignited a candle, and, holding it in one hand, he passed it close to the woman's eyes, the heavy lids of which he alternately raised with the fingers of his disengaged hand.

The eyes returned a dull, sightless glare to the test.

As a last resort to arouse consciousness or discover imposture, he produced a delicate lancet, and, raising the lace about the woman's wrist, he lightly scarified the cold, white flesh. Blood sluggishly tinged the slight abrasion, but, to his amazement, the immobility of his subject failed to relax one jot; yet the experiment was not entirely without result, since at the same moment a voice, muffled and far away in sound, broke the expectant silence:

"Loyd! Loyd!"

The twilight had deepened to actual gloom, which the flickering of the weird candle-light but served to accentuate. It seemed impossible to establish evidence to prove that it was the lips of Margaret Revaleon that had framed the thrilling utterance; indeed, the eerie tone could be likened to nothing human.

Spellbound the young doctor stood, doubting the evidence of his senses, yet listening—listening, until it came again, with positive enunciation and import,

"Loyd!"

"In Heaven's name, who calls?" he exclaimed.

"Paula, your wife."

CHAPTER II.

"We see but dimly through the mists and vapors;
Amid these earthly damps,
What seem to us but sad, funereal tapers
May be heaven's distant lamps."

Though Loyd Morton had proved himself to be an ideal lover, he was at heart an eminently practical man. It is true he had not yet quite outlived that heyday of impressions that occurs somewhere in the first two score years of all lives. His eager mind grasped, with avidity, the various tenets of his day, and strove to fathom them; if he failed in any instance, he chose that happy mean between scepticism and positive unbelief, and waited for more light. He felt that he had been born into an epoch of rare progress, and that it behooved him to reject nothing worthy of intelligent consideration. There can be no doubt that the abundant sentiment in his nature lent itself to the higher phases of intellectual inquiry; yet, in justice, he could not be called a visionary person—at least, prior to this particular April evening. It was but natural that, in the wide circle of his professional and social acquaintanceship he should have fallen in with more than one disciple of the advanced theory of modern spiritualism. To converse with all such, he lent a courteous, even interested, ear. He found himself not infrequently listening in amazement to certain thrilling experiences related by the initiated, and, as a result, he promised himself the satisfaction of investigating the matter for himself some day; but into his busy existence that day had not as yet found its way. Consequently, he had formed no opinion whatever as regarded the so-called communion between the living and the dead. As has been said, his interest in the question had been excited—more, possibly, than comported with the distinction of his professional position; but it is doubtful if he would have rejected the investigation simply on this account.

Here, however, was an instance fairly thrust upon him, which startled, amazed, and mystified him. That the woman, Margaret Revaleon, was in a state of complete coma, he had satisfied himself beyond peradventure. Accomplished physicians are not apt to be deceived regarding the results of infallible tests; and yet here was a subject, absolutely unconscious, speaking not only intelligently, but with a degree of appositeness that, considering the circumstances, was appalling.

Thoroughly alive to the situation, not to say excited, yet sufficiently master of himself to keep well within the pale of scepticism, Morton resumed his seat, which he had quitted in some agitation when informed that he was face to face with the invisibility of his wife, and disposed himself to probe the mystery.

Mrs. Revaleon had ceased to breathe sterterously; a complacent, almost smiling expression had taken possession of her features, and she had leaned forward in her chair, with outstretched hands, though her eyes remained closed.

"Give me your hands, Loyd," she said in the same murmurous tone, that retained not a vestige of her normal voice, "will you not welcome me back?"

Morton relinquished his hands into the keeping of that cold clasp, in silence.

"O Loyd, my husband," the voice resumed, "can you not believe that it is I, Paula, your wife?"

"What would be the consequence of my saying that I cannot believe?" he responded with constraint.

"It would make it all the more difficult for me to convince you that I am indeed with you."

"Then I will say that I believe."

"I am clairvoyant. You cannot mislead a spirit capable of reading your mind as though it were an open book. Ah, what can I do to conquer your incredulity? What can I say to convince you that I am as truly with you at *this* moment as I was at any moment while in the flesh? It is your sacred love for me that has attracted my spirit to this fortuitous reunion. Oh, do not doubt me!—rather assist me, if ever you loved me, Lolo!"

He started then, and his dark eyes shone like twin stars. "How came you by that name?" he demanded unsteadily—"a name never uttered in the presence of any living being, save myself?"

"How came I by that endearing epithet!" the voice answered. "Did not my absorbing fondness for you suggest it? Was it not the coinage of my affectionate fancy? I beseech you, separate this medium, through whom I speak, from my personality. Understand that this woman is practically dead, while it is I, Paula Morton, who actuate her brain, her voice, her very being."

"My God!" exclaimed Morton, "this is beyond my comprehension!"

"Let perfect faith control you while this brief communion lasts; then take refuge in scepticism—if you can. You are so unhappy, so wretched, without me, that I should think you would be glad to meet me more than half way."

"I cannot see you, if it is you."

"Another question of faith! But it matters not; you will believe in time. So you miss me?"

"My life is a void without my wife," he replied.

"What divine love! Loyd, you and I constitute an affinity. I know now how rare are earthly affinities; that is, unions of souls that are destined to endure through all eternity. Every soul born into existence is allotted an affinity, which sooner or later it will meet, in accordance with divine ordinance. These unions of kindred souls, attuned, as they are, to surpassing harmony, are rare upon earth, though they may occur, as in our case; but, generally, years—even ages—may transpire ere these ineffable coalitions are consummated. Our souls are affined; we have no need to search. We are simply undergoing a temporary separation. You are coming to me; I am waiting for you. I rejoice in the thought, and the knowledge gives me strength to control this medium, who brings me into such intimate communion with you."

At this juncture in the extraordinary interview, a bell rang violently, and a moment later a light rap sounded upon the door, a preconcerted signal between the doctor and his servant, announcing the fact that another visitor demanded admittance.

It is not surprising that Morton was too deeply absorbed to notice the threatening intrusion.

"If—if I thought," he said, his hesitation marking the intensity of his emotion, "if I suspected that I was being made the dupe of some plausible imposture, the butt of some sort of nameless sorcery, I—"

"Loyd, Loyd," wailed the voice, "you wrong me, wrong me grievously! Your incredulity dooms me to such unhappiness as I have never known."

"You imply that you have known some degree of unhappiness! You were never unhappy upon earth; are you so now—wherever you may be?"

"Oh, no! I am supremely happy."

"Supremely happy," he echoed, jealously; "supremely happy, though separated from me! and yet you term your love for me divine!"

"It is divine, divine as all things heavenly are. For the perfecting of such love as mine the evidence of the senses is not requisite; indeed, it would prove antagonistic. Your earthly eyes are blind; but from my vision have fallen away the scales, which fact renders my spiritual sight clairvoyant. I can see you at all times, and can be with you with the celerity of the birth of thought. Where then, in what resides the separation for me?"

"For *you*!" he cried, passionately; "ay, but for *me*! I am blind; these mortal scales are upon my eyes, I am not clairvoyant. The wings of thought refuse to raise me above this present slough of despond into which I have fallen; they flutter with me back among the memories of the dead past, but that is all! I am still living in the flesh, and heaven knows that this bitter separation is a reality to me!"

Thereupon ensued a momentary silence, which was ere long ruptured by the low, gentle voice.

"Loyd," it whispered, "you bind me to earth; your love fetters my spirit!"

"If your love were unchanged," he murmured, disconsolately, "there would be no bondage in such magnetism!"

"My love, having been spiritualized, is far more absorbing than ever it was."

"Then why should you complain that the attraction of my love binds you to earth? If it is the spirit of my wife that addresses me at this moment, as you pretend, if your love for me is greater and purer than it was upon earth—which, as God is my judge, I can scarcely credit—why should you not be happier in this sphere, where I am, than in the realm of heaven?"

"Simply because it is not heaven here."

"But *I* am here!"

"For a time only, for a little space; and there is no reckoning of time in eternity. Soon you will be with me—forever."

"Paula! Would I were with you now!"

"Hush! That wish is impious."

"Ah, but think! I have the means at my command to send my soul into eternity, within the twinkling of an eye!"

"Into eternity, but not to me. Oh, my husband, there is no sin accounted so heinous as the taking of a God-given life. You must live on until your appointed hour, then come into the courts of heaven with hands unstained, with soul unsullied."

Raised to a pinnacle of exaltation which, in his normal condition, he would have deemed unattainable to one of his stanch rationality, Morton exclaimed:

"I *cannot* live without you! After what I have just heard, which renders my dreary existence tenfold more dreary, I will not hold myself responsible for what I may do. Oh, Paula, my wife, my wife! if you would not have me commit a crime against myself which may separate us for all eternity, come back to me!"

"I will come back to you," responded the voice.

"Oh, I do not mean enveloped in this ghostly invisibility!" he cried.

"No; Loyd, I will return to you in the flesh."

Supreme as had been the moment of his supplication, he had retained sufficient reason not to expect a concession ; consequently he felt that he was taking leave of his wits as he gasped,

"You will return to me—*in the flesh!*"

"In the flesh. Before the dawn of another day you shall take a living body in your arms and know that it is animated by my soul."

His clasp tightened upon the hands he held.

"Am I mad? Do I hear aright?" he faltered, his utterance thick with wonder ; "in God's name, *how* will you effect such reincarnation?"

There was a momentary pause ; and then the voice replied with some note of omen in its firmness :

"Mark the test I am about to give to you ! You will be called to attend a dying woman—you *are* called ; already is the messenger here ; a woman's soul is trembling upon the threshold of eternity. If you are alone with her when that soul takes wing, my spirit will instantly take its place, and your skill will do the rest, accomplish the resurrection of that body and secure our further communion. But there may be consequences over which I shall have no control ; those consequences *you* will have to confront. Are you willing to accept the chances?"

"Willing! All I ask is the opportunity to meet them!"

"Very well. You have conjured me back to earth. With you rests the responsibility!"

The voice expired in a sigh, and the hitherto quiescent figure of Margaret Revaleon shuddered, while her hands trembled convulsively. Thereupon followed the sterterous breathing again, and the painful gnashing of the teeth. An instant later her great hazel eyes flashed open, and rested with a sightless stare upon the flickering candle.

"Oh, where am I?" she moaned languidly, her voice having retaken its normal tone ; then came a flash of intelligence like the nascent tremor of dawn ; at last full consciousness of her surroundings.

"Oh, is it you, Doctor Morton?" she faltered, smiling faintly ; "really I had forgotten you. Where have I been? What do you think of my case? Is it hopeless? By your grave look I infer it must be."

At this moment the signal at the door was repeated more peremptorily. Morton gathered his energies with an effort.

"Excuse me for a moment, Mrs. Revaleon," he stammered, with difficulty commanding himself, "I will return to you presently."

With a nervous step, quite at variance with his wonted calm demeanor, he hastened into the ante-chamber, closing the door behind him.

The gas burned brightly, and its flare dazzled his sight accustomed to the twilight that reigned within the study ; but he was well able to recognize the young gentleman who hastened forward at his approach.

"Oh, Loyd!" exclaimed the visitor, with an accent of mingled agony and reproach, "what an eternity you have kept me waiting! In heaven's name, come to us at once! Romaine is dying!"

"Romaine—dying!" echoed Morton.

"We fear so; God grant that we may be mistaken! But will you come at once?"

"At once of course, Hubert."

"Then follow me; the carriage is waiting."

The young man had reached the door even as he spoke.

Morton paused in the midst of the brilliantly lighted room, every vestige of color fled even from his lips.

"Merciful Powers!" he murmured, "am I waking from some hallowed dream or from some infernal nightmare? No, no! this is the test *she* bid me mark! It is no fantasy! it is reality!"

Even in his haste he was mindful of his waiting client, and flung open the door of his study. A sharp draught of air from the open casement extinguished the candle that burned within, leaving in its stead the lance of a pale young moon.

Bathed in the aqueous light stood Margaret Revaleon, regarding him with wistful eyes.

"Well, doctor," she began, "you have returned to pass sentence upon me?"

"By no means, Mrs. Revaleon," he answered, hastily; "I have only to say that your case is a singular one. While I have no reason to believe that any real danger will ever result from the 'condition' of which you complain, I am forced to admit that I know of no treatment for you at this time. I beg you to excuse me now, as I am called to attend a critical case. My servant will wait upon you."

And with these hasty words, Morton took his departure.

CHAPTER III.

"Now help, ye charming spells and periaps!"

SIR FRANCIS BACON maintained that every man is a debtor to his profession, and that in seeking to receive countenance and profit therefrom, he should of duty endeavor, by way of amends, to be a help and ornament thereunto. Undoubtedly every genuine professor realizes this obligation; while if he be of a truly appreciative nature, he will not lose sight of a concomitant duty towards those whose favor has lent encouragement to the practice of his art or profession, especially at the period of its incipience.

Such a debt of gratitude did young Doctor Loyd Morton owe the Effingham family.

Sidney Effingham had been a magnate in his day; a man who had freely given his distinguished influence towards the refinement of our, in some respects, too rapid Republican growth, and he had gone down to the tomb of his ancestors, leaving behind him worthy exemplars in the persons of his widow, his son and daughter. There had been an elder son, Malcolm by name, whose unwavering friendship for Morton in boyhood and early manhood had opened an avenue to the penniless student and orphan into the bosom of the Effingham family; but Malcolm Effingham had died of the Roman fever in Italy, and it had been Morton's melancholy duty, as the young gentleman's travelling-companion and guest, to close his friend's eyes in death and return to America with his body.

The untimely demise of his elder son had proved a grievous stroke to Sidney Effingham; yet he bore up bravely, in a measure transferring his thwarted interest to Malcolm's friend and class-mate. Thus it came about that Loyd Morton owed the perfecting of his education to Mr. Effingham, who insisted that the young man should return to Europe at his expense and complete his studies. Moreover, such was his almost morbid affection for all that pertained to his dead son, Sidney Effingham bequeathed a comfortable living to Morton, thus acknowledging him, as it were, an adopted son.

The death of this beneficent gentleman occurred during Morton's courtship in Germany, precipitating his marriage and immediate return to his native land. Though the widow welcomed young Mrs. Morton with maternal fervor, to Morton she frankly expressed her regret that he had placed himself beyond the possibility of assuming Malcolm's vacant place in her household.

"But my interest in you remains unabated," she assured the young physician, "and it shall be my pleasure to do all that lies in my power to insure you success in your chosen profession. Otherwise, leaving my personal affection for you out of the account, I should fail in my duty as the wife and mother of those who held your welfare and success so closely at heart."

And Serena Effingham had acted in accordance with her noble convictions and promise. Thanks to her unflagging interest in his behalf, Morton seemed to spring with winged feet into the coveted haven of fashionable patronage. There is no gainsaying the fact that he maintained his position by consummate ability, and equally there is no disputing the fact that he was fortunate in the possession of such eminently influential backing.

As has been stated, such were his engagements that but few hours of the day or night could he call his own, even during the period of his bereavement. His success had been phenomenal, two brief years having assured his standing among the leading physicians of his day.

This great burden of obligation weighed upon the young doctor's mind, as he sat beside Malcolm Effingham's brother while the carriage-wheels dashed through the murky streets of the town and out over the sodden road that led to Belvoir,—weighed upon his mind to the partial obliteration of his recent weird experience with Margaret Revaleon.

Romaine Effingham—dying!

Oh, it seemed incredible! How was it possible to couple that brilliant spirit with the grim austerity of Death?

"And yet," he thought, with a sickening pang at his heart, "should she die now, in her nineteenth year, she will have enjoyed as many days as were vouchsafed my poor Paula."

Paula! Merciful heaven, how came it about that he should feel at that moment as though he were summoned to Paula's bedside and not Romaine's?

With a start that was half-guilty, half-superstitious, he laid his hand upon the arm of the mutely eloquent figure at his side.

"Hubert!" he exclaimed in the tone of one who would fain drown the voice of conscience, "Hubert, my dear boy, why do you not speak? Are you so anxious?"

"Anxious!" replied young Effingham, "I am almost distracted. What will become of us should anything happen to Romaine! O Loyd, what was I to mother compared with father and Malcolm? what am I to her compared with Romaine?"

"You are unjust to yourself, Hubert, you——"

"Hush, hush! Such words from you, who know us so well, sound like lame condolence! I cannot bear it while there is a glimmer of hope. By and by, should there be no help for it, I may be glad to listen to you; but not now—oh, not now!"

"Hubert," Morton remarked after a momentary pause, "you must be calm. In the few minutes that remain to us I must learn from you something concerning Romaine's condition."

"God knows I am willing to help you all I can."

"What has happened to her? How is she affected?"

"We were sitting at dinner, Romaine being in her usual health and spirits. Indeed, I do not remember when she has been so gay. I suppose her high spirits were caused by the receipt of a letter to-day from Colley, stating that he should sail from Havre by the following steamer, and might outstrip his letter."

At mention of that name, which was simply the nickname of Colston Drummond, the affianced lover of Romaine Effingham, Loyd Morton shuddered involuntarily.

"Well, well," he urged, "what then?"

"Well, in the midst of a burst of laughter—you know her laugh, so like a peal of bells—Romaine suddenly turned ashy pale, and, with a gasp, sank back in her chair. My God, I shall never forget my sensation at that moment! She looked as father looked when he died."

"What did you do?"

"Do! We did everything that should be done in such an emergency. Mother was as firm as a rock; but I saw the look of despair in her eyes as she turned to me, saying, 'Go for Loyd, with all speed; go yourself, and bring him back!'—I have secured you; I have done all that I can. The rest remains with you."

"With me!" gasped Morton. "Do you mean to say that you have not called in some other physician at such a crisis?"

"We have perfect confidence in you, Loyd."

"Good heavens! This is too great a responsibility! I am not—not—" He was going to add, "I am not equal to such an emergency. You must send at once for some other doctor," when he paused abruptly, turning ghastly pale as the words recurred to him, unbidden as the mournful rustling of the leaves of memory,

"A woman's soul is trembling upon the threshold of eternity. If you are alone with her when that soul takes wing, my spirit will instantly take its place, and your skill will do the rest. Accomplish the resurrection of that body, and secure our further communion."

Consultation with another physician might be the means of saving Romaine Effingham's life! After all, what mattered it if he were destined to resurrect her body, though henceforth it was to become the domicile of a soul for the recovery of which he would have sacrificed twenty thousand Romaines?

Consequently he bit his lips in silence. And at that moment the massive gaitway of Belvoir gave back a sepulchral echo of the grinding carriage-wheels, while lights glimmered wanly beyond the fog-tailed lawn.

An exceedingly charming girl was Romaine Effingham. She possessed that unconscious grace which resides in the joy of youth and ease of heart. She was beautiful, accomplished, brilliant, and when, upon the eve of his departure for Europe, her engagement to Colston Drummond was announced, the fashionable world joined its plaudits and congratulations to its acknowledgments for the favor of having been permitted to witness at least one genuine example of the eternal fitness of things.

Not to have known Romaine Effingham personally, may be accounted a positive deprivation; while, to have been ignorant of the existence of "Colley" Drummond, that estimable corypheus of patrician youth, was equivalent to confessing one's self quite unknown; and that without a shade of irony, since Colston Drummond was, in the best sense, a man of that world which has reason to consider itself well-born. So much having been

admitted, one may feel inclined to sympathize with the legion who loved Romain and admired her lover.

It was a grievous sight indeed, to see the fair young girl low lying in her dainty chamber, with the pallid sign of death on lip and cheek. Equally pitiful was it to mark the mute anguish of that noble mother, whose life had been one era of devotion to her children. They had been her very idols—her treasures beyond price. She had passed whole days and nights in attendance upon them during their slight juvenile ailments—days and nights which to fashionable women of her ilk are precious epochs of social dissipation. To have gone into society leaving one of her children ill at home, it mattered not how trifling the indisposition, would have been as utter an impossibility to Serena Effingham as for her to have regarded with an indifferent eye the present deathlike syncope of her beautiful daughter. As she had been faithful in the minutiae of maternal duty, so was she proportionally constant in greater exigencies. With eyes haggard with suspense, she watched the wan face upon the pillow, while her heart-beats told her how the laggard moments dragged themselves away—away from the happy past, on towards the menacing future.

A sepulchral silence had settled upon the house, portentous in its profundity; consequently the slightest sound seemed almost painfully magnified. Naturally, then, the roll of the carriage-wheels upon the flagging before the principal entrance sounded an alarm to the anxious watcher's heart.

"They have come at last!" she breathed. "God grant that they come not in vain!"

With the prayer trembling upon her lips, she met Loyd Morton at the head of the staircase. She noted the deadly pallor upon the young doctor's face and the unusual dilation of his eyes; but she thought they argued his keen anxiety, as, in a certain sense, they did. She gave him her hand, with a firm clasp, and dimly noted that his were as cold as ice. She drew him to her and kissed him, heedless of the fact that he failed to return the salute.

"You must save her, Loyd," she murmured. "Our hope is built upon your skill. If ever you loved us, have pity upon us now!"

He made no reply to the solemn injunction; perhaps words failed him at that supreme moment, perhaps he felt silence to be the wiser course. She relinquished her hold upon him, and he crossed the hall. At the door of the dimly lighted chamber he paused and turned abruptly. The rustle of her dress betrayed the fact that she was close in his wake.

"Permit me to make an examination," he faltered, with evident constraint; "I—I will then report." The strained circumstances seemed to invest his words with a defiant ring—at least, her woman's instinct suggested the fancy; but she respected his request and joined her son, where he stood, at the head of the staircase, leaning upon his arm for support. From where they stood, mother and son could see Morton bending above the inanimate form, could watch him as he lowered his head close to the pillow, holding it in that position for what seemed a very eternity.

Was he listening for some token of fluttering vitality? Was he applying some remedy?

Once Serena Effingham started, as a single word, possibly a name, reached her listening ear from the dim chamber. Was it a name she heard? If so, whose name? For an instant she was half inclined to fancy that her tense anxiety had produced some passing delusion. Yet, had she been put upon her oath, she would have been forced to confess that the name which had reached her was that of one dead—the name of *Paula*!

The fancy appeared preposterous; she had no intention of betraying such a piece of sensationalism to her son, while Hubert Effingham had no opportunity of inquiring into the cause of her sudden emotion, since at the moment Morton quitted the bedside and came quickly forth to join them.

"Her swoon is yielding," he said, in answer to the eloquent appeal of their eyes.

"Thank God!"

"Yes, she had passed beyond the portals of death, but she has returned." He spoke according to his present conviction, not as the scientist he prided himself upon being. "She will shortly be conscious," he added, cutting short their eager queries; "her mind will be in an acutely sensitive condition, and, absolute quiet throughout the house is indispensable. I will watch till midnight when, if her condition is favorable. I will relinquish my place to you." He glanced at Serena Effingham. "I would advise you to secure what rest you can during the intervening hours."

He turned to re-enter the chamber, when the lady laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Loyd," she whispered, "tell me one thing. What do you consider the cause of this awful trance?"

"Her heart," he answered.

"Then she may die as her father died?"

"It does not follow. She may never have a recurrence of the trouble. What I fear is—"

"What do you fear?"

The sensitive lines of his face seemed to petrify as with a desperate resolution he replied:

"I fear her mind may be affected by this attack."

"Her mind! Oh, Loyd, tell me anything but that!"

"Would you prefer her death?" he demanded, almost harshly.

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"Then let us hope for the best; or at least make the best of the inevitable. You may take comfort in the fact that I promise you Romaine's life."

He turned abruptly as he spoke, and entering the chamber, silently but securely closed the door.

Then it was that the mother's fortitude gave way, and turning to her son, she flung herself upon his breast and burst into tears.

"Oh, Hubert," she sobbed, "what dreadful spell is upon us? After all these years—though I have known Loyd from his infancy, have loved him almost as one of my own children, to-night he seems a stranger to me! What does it mean? what does it all portend?"

He strove to soothe her with loving words, and almost bearing her precious weight in his arms, he led her away to her own apartments.

And then, in expressive silence, the night wore on to its mid-watch. The pale crescent of the moon dropped behind the hills, while here and there a lonesome star peered forth in the rifts of the scudding wrack.

At last, and just upon the stroke of midnight, the vigil was disturbed by the sound of wheels, of footsteps, of voices, and by the muffled unclosing and closing of doors. Loyd Morton started from his chair at the bedside of the sleeping girl. He was pallid to the lips, and with difficulty commanded the desperate condition of his nerves. Contrary to his commands, the door of the chamber had been opened to admit the stalwart figure of a

man. The pair had not met in many a year, but in the dim radiance of the shaded lamp, their recognition was instantaneous.

For an instant Morton quailed. The intruder who had braved his authority, to which even the anxiety of a mother deferred, was Colston Drummond!

The confrontation bristled with omen.

CHAPTER IV.

"I do not know what witchcraft's in him."

HAD he been put upon the rack Loyd Morton would still have been unable to give any coherent account of his vigil at the bedside of Romaine Effingham. Four hours had elapsed from the moment that he closed the chamber-door until, upon the stroke of midnight, it opened to admit Colston Drummond. Reflection failed to assist him to any satisfactory explanation regarding the flight of the time. He was morally certain that he had not lost an instant in slumber, the tension upon his mind would be almost proof positive that he could not have lapsed into unconsciousness; and yet the span seemed a complete void as he looked back upon it.

Romaine still lived; indeed her hold upon vitality had visibly strengthened since Morton's advent, yet, so far as his cognizance of the phenomenon went, Nature unassisted had taken the resurrection into her own hands. Resurrection was Morton's estimate of the miracle, since every token of immediate dissolution was present in the appearance of his patient when first he bent over her. The eyes were glazed, the flesh clammy, and the pulsations imperceptible. The extremities were cold with that peculiar chill which is so eloquent to the practised touch. Death's conquest was imminent, perhaps assured, and he had done nothing to avert the dread consummation—nothing save to murmur the name of one which embodied, for him, the quintessence of existence here and hereafter.

"Paula!" he had murmured, half tentatively, half mechanically.

It must have been the result of sorcery if simply at the utterance of that name Death furled his pale flag and left the field to his erstwhile routed opponent. Yet such was the case, as the physician's keen senses promptly detected. The young man experienced a thrill second to none that as yet he had encountered in his professional career, as upon his finger-tips came the delicate flutter of the pulse, while to his eager sight followed a gentle upheaval of the breast that sent a quivering sigh to his listening ear.

It was a supreme moment to Loyd Morton.

Naturally his first impulse was to apply some restorative and thus assist resuscitation. There was brandy at hand, a small quantity of which he inserted, drop by drop, between the parted lips. The effect produced seemed magical; the respiration became steady, a delicate glow crept into the wan cheeks, while a genial warmth attended by that most encouraging of symptoms, a dew-like moisture, relaxed the cold rigidity of the hands that returned the faintest possible pressure as they rested in the young doctor's clasp. Every token of convalescence by degrees made itself manifest and progressed until the soft gray eyes unclosed, instinct with crescent intelligence.

The watcher bent eagerly so that his countenance should fill the field of her vision, so that her awakening consciousness should grasp his personal-

ity to the exclusion of all other objects. Apparently the unpremeditated act met with flattering success, in that Romaine Effingham's first utterance framed his name.

"Loyd!"

It was simply an articulate breath, but it was a conscious utterance capable of interpretation, and Morton was satisfied; nay, he was enraptured.

"Paula!" he exclaimed, in his exaltation, "Paula, you have come back to me!"

"I have—come back," was the tremulous reply.

"And we shall never, never again be parted," he urged with passionate intensity.

The dilated eyes watched him as if spell-bound.

"You understand that you are no longer Romaine, but Paula, my own dear, true love," he continued, giving each word its due import; "Romaine has gone to her rest, but you have returned to make my life once more worth the living! Oh, my dear one, tell me that you realize the situation, that you comprehend my words! Let me hear you say that you are Paula, my wife."

"Paula, your wife," came the obedient echo.

Had he been in his normal condition of self-control, Morton's exuberant satisfaction might have been tempered by a consciousness of the fact that he was forcing his own volition upon a cataleptic subject; the strained circumstances under which he labored, however, spared him this somewhat matter-of-fact view of the case. Indeed, he had closed all avenues of approach to unwelcome spectres of the scientific order, for the time being at least. Moreover, he had permitted himself to lose sight of an attribute which upon more than one occasion had been imputed to him. It had been whispered among his hyper-sensitive patients that the young physician possessed that most mysterious, yet positive, of gifts, mesmeric power, animal magnetism,—what you will. Be that as it may, Loyd Morton undoubtedly exerted a strong attraction for those in whom he was personally interested. Babbler had informed him of his endowment much, be it said, to his annoyance; but the fact remained that he held his fellow man in thrall, whether he would or not.

Either of the above considerations would have tinctured his overflowing cup with bitterness; but as he had already drained that cup of joy, it remained for digestion to prove whether the adverse mixture had crept in in some ingustable form.

A few more words of passionate admonition he addressed to his patient ere the eye-lids drooped and the breathing became measured as in that profound slumber which succeeds exhaustion.

And thereupon began that extraordinary vigil, during which Morton was conscious of naught save the assured resurrection and possible—he dared not think probable—reincarnation.

She had placed her hand in his ere she fell asleep, and he sat close beside her scarcely venturing to relinquish it into the keeping of its fellow where it rested upon her breast. By the light of the shaded lamp he studied the calm beauty of the girl's features, the restful slumber lending a heightening touch to their exquisite outline.

Always a being set above and apart from his anxious existence, he had seen even less than formerly of Romaine since his marriage, and in that time she had matured into the perfection of womanhood. He had loved her, as he had loved the other members of her family, with a love born of

gratitude. There had been no sentiment in this love beyond that of grateful appreciation; he had loved Romaine exactly in the vein that he had loved her brothers; had he been called upon, he would have laid down his life for any of them with undiscriminating loyalty. Having been his intimate friend, Malcolm might have stood first in a test of self-sacrifice, but there had never been the slightest shade of difference in his sense of allegiance to either Hubert or Romaine. In a word, he had never loved Romaine otherwise than as a friend; within the niche before which his soul bowed down in all-absorbing idolatry he had set up the image of the woman who had been his wife, and as it was a case of soul-worship with him, the niche remained occupied to the eternal exclusion of rival effigies.

He recalled with a flutter of timid pride how officious friends, ambitious of his welfare, had ventured to couple his name with that of Romaine.

" You were her brother's ' Fidus Achates,' " they urged ; " you have received not only marks of affection from every member of her family, but positive encouragement in every form. Take Malcolm's vacant place and be a son and brother and husband all in one."

To this friendly folly he smiled in answer, saying, " You admit that I assumed the rôle of Achates to perfection, do you ? "

" Certainly ! " was the reply.

" Then let me rest upon my laurels. I am wise in my own generation. I know the limit of my histrionic ability and have no wish to attempt an impersonation of Phaethon."

Hence his friends inferred that he was disinclined to court Romaine Effingham through modesty or disdience, little dreaming that he refused to enter the lists through lack of inclination. Even upon this night as he sat at her bed-side, keeping vigil while she slept, satisfied that she was convalescent, he was simply grateful that heaven in its mercy had spared her to her mother and brother, and—

A cold perspiration akin to the dews of death, pearlyed upon his brow, grown suddenly pallid, as a problem of dire import flitted like a grawsome spectre into the field of his speculation.

" If, " suggested the phantom, with appalling reason, " she is spared to her mother and brother, is she not spared as well to her affianced lover ? Will he not shortly claim her as his own ? And if, as you have been persuaded to believe, her soul is at rest while the soul of one you have loved and lost is renascent, incarnate in her body, how will you bear this second separation, this alienation in life, which promises to be infinitely more trying than that of death ? "

He sat as one spell-bound, listening in horror to the silent voice.

He relaxed his hold upon the girl's hand and it fell limply at her side. His eyes grew haggard with the speechless agony of uncertainty, while his pallid lips strove to utter the cry of his anguished soul, " My God, why did I not foresee this emergeney ? Thou art my judge that I would not cause her one instant's misery, would not cast my shadow in the path of her perfect happiness for my life, and yet—" " And yet, " resumed the voice of the phantom—alas, with no intonation of mockery—" and yet you must secure her body in order to claim communion with the soul that now animates it. Look upon her, strive to realize that this is Paula your wife and no longer the daughter of your benefactors."

" Oh, grant me some proof ! " he moaned ; " Paula ! Paula, speak to me ! In heaven's name, give me the satisfaction of *knowing* that you are with me once again, or this uncertainty will drive me mad ! " He had dropped upon his knees at the bedside and had almost roughly resumed possession

of her hand, passionately pressing it to his lips. "Paula," he cried, "assure me that you are here, grant me some token that you recognize me, Loyd, your husband, and help me to shape my course of action, for now is the appointed time; one precious moment lost and we may be estranged, hopelessly parted. I am groping in darkness like unto the shadow of death. If ever I needed thy guiding hand, I need it now, in this supreme, this awful moment. Oh, hear me, Paula! I conjure you, speak to me!"

As if in answer to his desperate exhortation, she stirred in her sleep, and he felt the soft flutter of her hand as it lay crushed between his.

"No, no!" he panted, "you *must* speak, or I shall not be satisfied that it is indeed *you*! Call me Loyd, husband—anything you will, so that I recognize your presence?"

He arose and bent low above her, almost crying aloud in exultation as her lips parted to exhale his name, simply his name.

"Loyd!"

Then the profound slumber resumed its sway.

He raised the quiescent figure in his arms and imprinted a passionate kiss upon the low brow.

"Did you not promise me," he whispered, "that before the dawn of another day I should take a living body in my arms and know that it is animated by your soul? Your prophecy has come true and I thank God for it!"

Very gently he lowered the delicate form among the pillows and with a reverent touch placed the hand that he had caressed, within the clasp of its fellow; then he turned and began to pace the shadowy chamber in a state of uncontrollable excitement.

"She warned me," he murmured, "that consequences would arise over which she should have no control; warned me that I should have to confront them. I assured her that I was not only ready, but eager to accept the chances. What was my conviction at that moment compared with the overwhelming conviction that commands me *now*? Then she was intangible, invisible even,—a spirit; now she is in the flesh and has addressed me with lips of flesh! Be the consequences what they may, this body which has served her soul with the means of reincarnation shall belong to me, as wholly and entirely as her soul, which is mine to all eternity!"

"You do not love that body," whispered the spectral Mentor; "beautiful as in itself it is, it possesses no attraction for you."

"By degrees I shall learn to cherish it," was the undaunted reply; "shortly I shall love it as being *her* abode."

Argument was out of the question in his existing condition of mental exultation; not that he had quite lost his grip upon himself, since some semblance of common-sense had borne ecstatic fancy company in her flight to the lofty pinnacle upon which she now poised, as his next more material thought gives evidence. He had reached the fire-place in his nervous perambulation and had paused upon the hearth, mechanically setting his gaze upon the sinouldering embers.

"I would to heaven," he muttered, "that Paula's spirit had returned to me in any other guise than this! I shudder before the complication that looms upon the near horizon, and yet in what am I to be blamed for what of necessity must transpire in the immediate future? How can I be expected, in the very nature of things, to be able to explain to Drummond the reason that he should cease to cherish his love and relinquish all to me? Would he not consider me hopelessly insane were I to lay before him the reason for my determined action, expose a scheme which even in

my eyes seems unparalleled in the history of man? No, no! I am convinced that so occult a compact must remain an inviolable secret between the Infinite and me. I feel myself to be but a mere factor in some great covenant, an instrument, a simple means tending towards an end of which I am in ignorance."

The smouldering embers fell together upon the hearth, emitting one expiring lance of flame, illumining his pallid features grown tense and rigid with resolution.

"I may be forced to dissimulation, even to deceit," he concluded, turning away from the dazzling gleam, "in order to effect my purpose. Already, as it were unconsciously, have I prepared Mrs. Effingham for possible catastrophes. I have told her that her daughter will recover, but in the same breath I warned her that I feared for her mental condition. Why I so warned her, heaven only knows. So far as I know at present that utterance was a lie, a base, ignoble fabrication; but it came unbidden to my lips, and who shall say that it came not at the instigation of some mysterious power beyond and above me? Who shall deny that, since I have ceased to be the man I was, some species of clairvoyant skill has descended upon me as the natural concomitant of the atmosphere of unreality that henceforth I shall breathe?"

He turned quickly and crept to the bedside, a desperate expression kindling in his haggard eyes as they rested upon the sleeping girl.

"Whether the issue proves me to be clairvoyant or brands me with falsehood, I must establish mental aberration in my patient, or lose my prize," he muttered; "I have burned my bridges and there is no retreating now!"

Scarcely had the incoherent words escaped his lips ere a clock tolled midnight and simultaneously the sound of wheels upon the terrace disturbed the peaceful course of night.

Thereupon followed the confusion of the muffled unclosing and closing of doors, excited voices and hurrying footsteps.

The sleeper stirred and moaned. Morton drew himself up into an attitude of unconscious defence, vaguely preparing himself for menace or attack, and in the next instant the door was thrust open to admit Colston Drummond.

No need to glance twice at the handsome face in order to guess the ungovernable anxiety and disarray that possessed the young lover.

"Is she alive?" he gasped, advancing into the middle of the chamber.

For answer, Morton imperiously waved him back in silence.

"No, no!" he cried, "give me some satisfaction! Tell me at least that I have not arrived too late! In God's name, why do you not speak?"

Barring his impetuous passage to the bedside, even laying detaining hands upon Drummond's shoulders, Morton was about to reply, when a low cry disturbed the ominous pause.

Snatched from her profound slumber and unobserved, Romaine Effingham had struggled up to a sitting posture and straightway fallen back with the cry which had startled the silence.

"Oh, why will you torture me?" she moaned piteously, flinging her arms across her face as if in desperate effort to shut out the sight of some uncanny apparition; take him—take him away and let me—rest! In mercy, let me rest!"

"Romaine! Great heaven! what does this mean?"

"Silence!" commanded Morton, releasing his hold and retreating a step, while a gleam of triumph flickered for one brief moment in his sunken

eyes : " Mr. Drummond, if you have any respect for the life of Miss Effingham, you will instantly leave this room ! "

" Her life ?" echoed Drummond in suspense, " it appears to me rather as if her *reason* were in jeopardy ! "

" You are right," came the firm response, " her reason is gone—she is *mad*!"

CHAPTER V.

" She is abused, stolen from me, and corrupted by spells and medicines bought of mountebanks."

" A DAY in April never came so sweet to show how costly summer was at hand," may be quoted as applicable to the rare dawn that succeeded that night of mystic import at Belvoir. The whole world seemed instinct with the smile of jocund spring. The dreary night had wept itself away, leaving its tears to jewel each new-born blade of grass. High up upon the spacious lawn crocuses fluttered their imperial raiment while snowdrops nodded and shook their bells as the bland wind swept by. The brook, swollen to a ruffled sea that inundated the low-land meadows, swirled through the willow-copse plumed to its crest with golden down in token of its glad revival. The trees stretched forth their yearning arms green with enamel of new buds ; and over all the sun, rejoicing in release, shot his bright lances into nook and dell where lurked the mists of yesterday.

Yet, despite the allurements of the outer world, the inmates of Belvoir House remained invisible, and the stately white columns were left to mount guard over their sharply defined shadows along the sunny piazza.

Within the mansion much of the silence and gloom of the preceding night prevailed. Breakfast had been prepared as usual, but the appointed hour had passed unheeded, a significant fact in a household of such rigid regulation. By and by, however, a rustle upon the staircase announced the appearance of Mrs. Effingham.

Meeting a servant upon the way, the lady inquired where she should find Mr. Drummond ; the man replied that he was closeted in the library with his young master, Hubert.

Thither she went directly, entering suddenly, and surprising the young gentlemen in the depths of earnest conversation.

" You have seen Romaine ?" they inquired simultaneously.

" Yes, I have just left her."

" How is she ?"

" Apparently safe."

Thereupon a strained silence ensued, during which Drummond led Mrs. Effingham to a divan and seated himself beside her, while Hubert watched the pair with an intentness that reflected the motive of his interrupted conversation with his future brother-in-law.

Colston Drummond was the first to break the silence.

" How do you find Romaine ?" he asked.

The lines of anxious care deepened upon the lady's face as she replied,

" I have said that I consider her perfectly safe."

" *Mentally* as well as physically ?"

" How can I tell ? As yet I have seen no signs of derangement in her."

" Ah !" exclaimed Drummond, eagerly, " then you refuse to credit *his* announcement that she is mad !"

"If you mean Loyd, I believe that he has spoken in accordance with his convictions."

"He *may* be mistaken," was the terse reply.

Serena Effingham glanced in a startled way from one to the other of the young men, and it was Hubert who came to her relief.

"Colley has been urging the necessity of calling in another physician," he explained. "But I tell him, mother, that we have reason to have implicit faith in Loyd's ability; besides, it would seem like insult to send for any one now that she is out of danger."

Drummond passed his hand over his curling hair with a gesture eloquent of impatient doubt.

"Of course, I will not interfere if you are satisfied," he said. "But I beg you to answer me one question, for I feel that I shall never sleep, nor rest in peace until it is answered."

"What is it, my dear boy?" inquired Mrs. Effingham.

"You will grant me that Romaine is my affianced wife?" he demanded.

"No one disputes that point."

"And she loves me with her whole heart and soul? No, you need not answer that question! Here upon my heart lies her last letter, written within the month. I want no better evidence that she is mine, as truly as woman was ever man's."

"Well? What more do you ask?"

"What more?" he cried excitedly. "I ask why she screamed at sight of me last night, crying piteously, 'Why will you torture me? Take him away and let me rest!' Can you explain such words upon *her* lips, and at sight of *me*?"

"She was not herself, Colston. Her attitude towards you is proof that her mind is indeed deranged."

He shook his head dejectedly.

"You have just told me that as yet you have seen no signs of derangement in her," he said. "Tell me, if you can, why she should seem insane to me, yet sane to you?"

At this juncture Serena Effingham turned to Drummond and flung her arms about his neck.

"My darling boy," she murmured, gently; "for you are that, and ever will be to me. You are worn out with fatigue and excitement. The shock of finding Romaine so ill, after your long and hopeful journey, has completely unhinged you. But I sympathize with you. Remember, that my love for her is akin to yours, and remember, too, that God is good; and I believe that, if we pray unceasingly, He in His mercy will give her back to us, sane and whole again."

He stooped and kissed her up-turned forehead, as he replied,

"God bless you, dear mother. I would that my faith were such as yours!"

Then, releasing himself from the lady's embrace, he rose, adding,

"I am going to breakfast with my mother at Drummond Lodge. Meanwhile, *watch Romaine!* I shall return later in the day and shall depend upon an interview with her."

"Which I may almost promise shall be granted you."

The voice that uttered these unexpected words was low of pitch yet startlingly sonorous; indeed, so unprepared were the trio for the sudden intrusion, that they were quite thrown off their guard, and turned about in some disarray.

Doctor Loyd Morton proved to be the intruder. He stood upon the

threshold of the apartment, parting the drapery with one outstretched hand, while the extreme pallor of his countenance, the firmness of his glance, as well as his pronounced dignity of mien, failed not to impress his beholders.

Divining that the situation threatened to become strained, Mrs. Effingham remarked quickly,

"We have been waiting for you to breakfast with us, Loyd." Then turning to Drummond, she added, "We shall look for you at dinner, Colston. Always bear in mind that you are at home at Belvoir."

Drummond bowed in silence, and with one glance at Morton, who had advanced a step, still holding the drapery, he passed into the hall, accompanied by Hubert.

The moment the drapery fell into place again, Serena Effingham advanced impulsively and kissed Morton with the maternal fervor which had ever been her wont with him.

"What a debt we owe you, Loyd, dear," she murmured beneath her breath, while her eyes lingered upon the swaying folds that hid Drummond from her view.

"Address your thanks to God," he replied, steadily, holding her in his arms.

"You have saved her life!"

"Say rather that He has spared her."

"She would have died had you not come to us."

The firmness of his glance never wavered for an instant as he answered,

"That is true; but we must bear in mind that I am but an instrument in the hands of the Almighty."

And his words were uttered with as sincere a conviction as had ever possessed him. However deeply he may have been impressed by the questionable part he was enacting, he was satisfied that Romaine Effingham would have been laid beside her father and brother in the tomb but for his influence, at the moment of the crisis. Through his interposition, he told himself, her body had been saved; with the fate that had befallen her soul he was not concerned. In a series of gyrations, never-ending in their recurrence, the words seemed to dance through his brain, "A body is theirs, a soul is mine; a soul is mine, a body is theirs," and so on, and on, and on, with incessant swirl and swing until, dazed and confused, he was forced to seek the palliative of fresh air under pretence of making a hasty round of visits upon his patients.

Meanwhile, above stairs in her dainty chamber, Romaine had been clothed in a robe of delicate texture, snowy as the billowy rifts of swan's-down that strayed about the neck and down the front, and had been placed in the azure depths of silken cushions upon a lounge that stood where the flood of genial sunshine streamed in. Beside her a huge cluster of mingled Freesia and golden jonquils spent their rich fragrance upon the air, conjuring, as it were, a hint of the exuberant spring-tide within the house. A very festival of warmth and light seemed to hold the chamber beneath its inspiring spell, calling forth ethereal tones in the blues of the rugs and hangings, and investing the silver upon the toilet-table with a quite magical glitter.

A little maid, meek-eyed as any dove, went here and there with noiseless step, putting the finishing touches to the final arrangement of the room. Now and again she would cast a dutiful glance towards the couch whereon lay her fair young mistress, with eye-lids drooping until the dark lashes rested upon her pale cheeks, her slender fingers interlaced upon her breast.

There were sparrows chirping somewhere about the casements, while from the distance the hum of pastoral life came drowsily to the ear.

The little maid fluttered her plumed brush about a Dresden cavalier, ruthlessly smothering a kiss that he had been vainly endeavoring for years to blow from the tips of his effeminate fingers to a mincing shepherdess, beyond the clock upon the mantle. In due time she relieved the love-lorn knight and fell upon his inamorata, favoring her with the same unceremonious treatment. The clock chimed twelve to the accompaniment of a brief waltz, presumably executed upon the lute of the china goat-herd that surmounted the time-piece, and at the same moment Romaine Effingham stirred. In an instant the faithful watcher was beside the couch.

"Miss Romaine!" she breathed, "it is I, Joan. Can I do anything for Miss Romaine?"

One of the slender hands was raised and rested lightly upon the little maid's head.

"Yes," was the low reply. "You may find him and send him to me."

"Who, Miss Romaine? Mr. Hubert?"

"No."

"Mr. Drummond?"

"No, no," emphatically, but not impatiently.

"Ah! I know—Doctor Morton?"

"Oh, yes!" with a sigh. "Loyd; go and find him."

"Yes, Miss Romaine."

But instead of Loyd Morton it was Serena Effingham who had hastened promptly to her daughter's side.

"Here I am, dear," she said, stooping to caress the fair low brow. "I have been besieged by callers to inquire for you, but from this moment I will deny myself to everyone until you are quite strong and well again."

"But I sent for Loyd," persisted the girl, in the same calm tone.

"Loyd has gone to visit his patients, my darling; but you may depend upon it he will not be gone long."

"I hope not. O, how devoted he is! Why, it is to him that I owe my life, for he has brought me back to life; and yet—and yet how strange it seems that I cannot recollect where I have been in all this time!"

"Dearest child, do not distress yourself," urged the mother anxiously; "you will recall everything in time and all will be well."

"Ah, but it is not distress to me! It was like a dream of heaven when I heard his voice calling me to come out of the shadow into the radiance that his dear face shed about me! Oh, there can be no death where he is, and no sorrow while he is by!"

She smiled as one smiles in sleep, and let her eye-lids droop until the lashes cast their shadow.

Each of the strange words deepened the pallor upon Serena Effingham's face, a sign of anxious care, perhaps not wholly due to her consciousness of the fact that her daughter was actually under the spell of a gentle hallucination; as a matter of fact it pained her that that hallucination had taken a course somewhat at variance with Drummond's interests.

As she had determined, from that moment she devoted herself to Romaine. The greater part of the time the girl slept soundly; during the intervals of wakefulness she seemed happy and at perfect peace within herself. Occasionally she would break her complacent silence by inquiries for Morton; otherwise she appeared inclined to enter into no sort of converse.

Such nourishment as was offered her she accepted with relish, remark-

ing once, with a fleeting smile, "I have seen enough of death for one life-time ; and I want to live, since I have so much to live for."

Plainly her volition materially assisted her convalescence, which was rapid—visible almost from hour to hour. And thus the uneventful afternoon waned to early evening. The goat-herd rehearsed his brief waltz over and over again, and the sun went westward, withdrawing his rays from the silken hangings and the silver upon the toilet-table.

Lacking in incident as the day had proved at Belvoir, to Loyd Morton it had been an epoch of emotions such as he had never dreamed of realizing.

Upon leaving Belvoir, he had gone directly to his house in town, into which he admitted himself with a latch-key. The object of his haste was to place himself before a portrait of his wife which hung in a room held sacred to her memory. Here, amid a thousand mementos of the happy past, it was his custom to sit during his leisure hours, brooding upon the wreck that had overtaken him.

To-day, however, he entered the mortuary apartment with buoyant step, wafting a smiling kiss up at the fair-haired Gretchen that gazed upon him from her frame above the mantel-piece. He flung wide the windows and blinds, even sweeping back the draperies, that the April sun might beam in and rob the place of shadow.

Then he placed himself before the portrait, and thus addressed it, giving vent to his pent-up exaltation,

"I no longer beseech you to speak to me with those beloved lips," he cried, "nor to smile upon me with those eyes that heaven has tinted with its own blue ! And yet I must adore your image, which, after all, is lost to me. But what care I, since your immortal soul actuates other lips to breathe your love for me, and kindles other eyes with that same deathless love when silence falls between us ? O, Paula, my idol ! tell me why I should be so infinitely blessed, when other men languish in their bereavement ? Thou knowest *now* that I am as other men are—as full of frailty and sin as any ; then, why am I favored with the lot of angels ? O my God, it cannot be that I have died and *this* is heaven !—this being with you and yet not seeing you, this exquisite aggravation which is mingled agony and bliss ! By some strange decree, you are with me again, yet I cannot see, I cannot touch, you. Am I perhaps in purgatory ? Or, worse, what if I should wake to find myself in a Fool's Paradise ! Heaven forbid : for that would drive me mad, and then my unbalanced spirit would wander gibbering through all eternity, and know you not ! Oh, no, no, no ! It is the magic of our great love that has united us in this communion, which ameliorates the misery of our transient separation, and I thank God for it ! Another day, and mayhap I shall be with you indeed—in the spirit, in heaven ! But, oh, my love, my life, my all in all, my divinity, never desert me ! In mercy and in love remain with me until the hour of my release ; then lead me back with thee !"

Thus more or less coherently he rambled on before the gazing portrait, in wild salutation and petition, until the sudden opening of the door hurled him from the heights of exaltation to earth.

Upon the threshold stood his man, amazed and at the same time abashed.

"You will excuse me, sir," he began brokenly ; "but I had no idea you were in the house. I heard voices up here, and I thought thieves had got in, or—or that the place was haunted !"

"I suppose I have the right to come and go and speak in my own house as I choose ?" retorted Morton testily, conscious of his inexplicable de-

meanor, and impotently furious accordingly. "Close the blinds and windows, and shut the room up. Have there been any calls?"

"No end of them, sir—and letters."

Glad to make his escape from a predicament that bordered too closely upon the ridiculous to be comfortable, Morton hastily descended to his office. In the ante-chamber, in which he had received Hubert Effingham on the preceding evening, he found ample affirmation of his man's statement that he had been sought during his absence. The slate was covered with names and requests, while upon a table lay a salver heaped with letters. These he mechanically examined until, at the very bottom of the heap, he came upon a missive which promptly arrested his attention. It was addressed in pencil and unsealed. A moment later and he had possessed himself of the startling information contained within.

He rang the bell in haste and excitedly anticipated the advent of his man by throwing open the door into the hall.

"When was this note left?" he demanded.

"Last evening, sir."

"At what hour?"

"Just before you left the house, sir, with Mr. Effingham."

"Before I left the house!" exclaimed Morton; "in heaven's name, why did you not bring it to me? It is a case of life and death! It should have been attended to without the loss of a moment. As I could not attend to it myself, I should have sent Chalmers in my place."

The poor man looked panic-stricken.

"You will excuse me, sir," he faltered, "but I knocked twice on the study-door while the messenger waited, but I got no response. I thought you couldn't come, so sent the messenger away."

"But why did you not give me the note before I went away with Mr. Effingham?"

"Well, the truth is, sir," stammered the man, "I had no idea you were going to leave during office-hours, so I just slipped down to finish a cup o' tea, and when I came up you were off and away."

"Fool! Do you know that your negligence may have cost Miss Casson her life?"

"Casson!" gasped the man, turning pale to the lips and staggering against the wall for support, "the Lord save us, sir; she's dead!"

"Dead!" echoed Morton, in horror.

"Dead, sir! They sent round word early this morning to say that she died at midnight sharp."

Morton staggered into his study, slamming the door in the man's face. He threw himself into the deep reclining-chair which Margaret Revaloon had occupied, and pressed his head between his hands in a desperate endeavor to collect his wits.

Hark! was it a repeating voice, or some mad phantasy, the coinage of his excited brain, that reproduced those thrilling words:

"You will be called to attend a dying woman,—you *are* called, already is the messenger here. A woman's soul is trembling upon the threshold of eternity. If you are alone with her when that soul takes wing, my spirit will instantly take its place—and your skill will do the rest. Accomplish the resurrection of that body and secure our further communion."

Two women were approaching the threshold of death and two messengers were waiting to summon him while those portentous words were being uttered! To *which* of the two should he have gone? *Which* one was intended, destined for the promised reincarnation?

CHAPTER VI.

‘ A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of men
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.’

MORTON roused from his passing stupor to find himself in a highly hysterical condition. He was inclined to laugh; in fact he did laugh in a mirthless way, with sobbing accent that closely resembled the act of weeping. He strove to assure himself that he had been the dupe of his own over-taxed nerves; that his present condition was wholly due to the excessive tension of his mental powers and want of sleep. He even went so far as to smilingly pledge his presumptive happiness in a copious dose of valerian. Thus armed with a species of Dutch courage, he threw himself upon a lounge and sought composure. If his wife's spirit, he reasoned, were omnipresent in all conditions and under all circumstances that pertained to him, as had been represented, and if that spirit were anxious to be reincarnate, as he had been given to understand that it was, why in the name of all that was rational, should it desert him, simply because he hastened to attend one dying woman instead of another? What possible difference could it make which corporeal attire it assumed? was it not reasonable to assume that a spirit, presumably clairvoyant, would pursue its affinity as the magnet seeks the pole, and appropriate any earthly guise, since the power was granted it? Was not Romaine Effingham's body as well fitted for its reinstatement in the flesh as another's?

True, the late Miss Casson had possessed a certain fascination for him, which had been commented upon before he went abroad to meet his fate, and naturally enough his wife had divined the *ci-devant* but now defunct spell when she took her place in his circle, and, woman-like, had rallied him upon it.

“If I had come to you bare-footed,” she often remarked jocosely, “I should not be constantly haunted by the consciousness that the fair Isabel is impatiently awaiting my shoes.”

To which quip he invariably replied with a laugh, “Such a suspicion would never occur to you, my dear, if the shoes did not pinch.”

And upon this occasion he conjectured, with a drowsy smile, that Isabel Casson's body would have failed to offer his wife's spirit the inducements to reincarnation that Romaine's might, under the circumstances, the beautiful Miss Effingham having been ever far removed from any such lovers' banter. And so, thanks to the drug and his own reasoning power, he lapsed involuntarily into sleep, the result of excessive fatigue. When at last he awoke, he sprang to his feet, startled at his own temerity. His hysteria had vanished, leaving him depressed and apathetic. With a thrill he noticed that the sun, obscured by the windy clouds of the early spring evening, had crept round to the back of the house and was glimmering fitfully in at his study windows. The day had waned, and heaven only knew how many precious hours he had lost.

He paused a moment, his blood halting in his veins as he strove to surmise what might have transpired at Belvoir during his absence. Fortunately for him, he had not overheard Drummond's half-implied doubts of the morning, but in guilty consciousness of his attitude towards Romaine's affianced lover, he instinctively felt the young gentleman to be, in all righteousness, his deadly antagonist.

Ten minutes later he had ordered his carriage and was being borne swiftly over the road that led to Belvoir, the invigorating breath of the April evening blowing in upon him and soothing his perturbation, despite himself. Consequently, as he passed through the gateway of Belvoir, that gave back that description of echo peculiar to aristocratic portals and cemeteries, he drew a long breath, feeling himself to be himself again. Even the apparition of a well-known, stalwart figure crossing the lawn from the direction of Drummond Lodge, failed to materially disturb his equilibrium, since he had already alighted before the figure had reached the garden stair leading up to the terrace.

He let himself in at the unbarred door, as he had been wont to do in the old time when he had been more an inmate of, than visitor at, the house, and, finding no one to delay or question him in the shadowy hall, he mounted the stairs, and laid his hand upon the door of his patient's chamber.

He entered noiselessly, even pausing and holding his breath in amazement at the vision that met his gaze.

Left alone for the moment, Romaine had arisen from her couch and had gone to one of the windows that afforded an enchanting prospect of the eastern hills, cloaked in the emerald film of bourgeoning spring, vivified by the effulgence of the setting sun. She stood with the silken drapery thrust back in her upraised hand, thus admitting the evening glow that lent a touch ethereal to her lovely face and flowing attire.

It seemed like the irony of Fate that Morton should have discovered her thus, instead of Drummond; but, even with his normal faculty of observation, Morton paused, spell-bound. He neither spoke, nor made the slightest movement that might disturb her intent reverie. He simply put the passionate yearning of his heart into one brief and mute appeal.

"Oh, my darling, my Paula, my wife! Come to me of your own accord. Come to me and let me feel the clasp of your dear arms about my neck!"

Whether she experienced the strong mesmeric power of that dumb appeal, or whether her woman's instinct only warned her of his silent presence, is a question for the determination of graduates in the science of psychology. Certain it is that she turned with a visible thrill, and came to him, the loose drapery of her sleeves falling back and exposing the exquisite symmetry of her outstretched arms. She laid those arms about his neck, glancing up into his face with a smile, and kissed him upon the lips.

"How I have longed for you!" she murmured; "and what an eternity since you left me!"

"Paula—Paula, my own sweet love!" he ventured breathlessly.

He stared hungrily into her upturned face, half-fearfully, half-confidently noting the effect of his words; but the calm smile remained unchanged, fixed upon her features as might have been the smile of peaceful death, save that it wore the tint of life. He caught her in his arms, passionately folding her to his breast, kissing her hair, her brow, and lips.

In the next moment his quick ear detected the sound of foot-falls upon the neighboring staircase.

"He is coming!" he whispered in involuntary alarm. "I promised him that he should see you; but, oh, my love, remember that it is I, not he, who claim you now—claim your every thought, your love wholly and entirely!"

"I shall not forget that which is a part of my own being," she answered gently. "With you by my side, I should not fear to face Satan himself!"

He bore her in his arms to the lounge and tenderly placed her upon it.

"I am your physician, as well as lover," he murmured; "and it is in my power to prevent your being tortured by a lengthy interview."

She smiled up at him reassuringly.

"Have no fear for me," she said. "But—but do not leave me."

And, upon the instant, Colston Drummond entered the chamber.

Morton stood at the head of the couch, his body half-turned away, his face studiously averted; yet, in spite of his attitude, he was conscious that Romaine's lover had thrown himself upon his knees beside her couch, and had possessed himself of one of her hands, which he pressed passionately to his lips.

"Romaine, Romaine," he faltered in evident suspense, "why do you turn away your head? Why do you hide your face from me? Do you not know me? It is I, Colston; I have come home to claim you for my wife, as we agreed. Have you forgotten? In mercy, try to think, try to recall the happy past! Oh, look at me, Romaine!"

A brief silence succeeded the eager appeal, only to be broken by a sharp gasp from Drummond.

"Great God!" he exclaimed in an accent of horror, "can it be that she does not know me? Dr. Morton, what does this mean?"

He had regained his feet and stepped so close to Morton that his breath fanned his cheek. Morton turned swiftly, and their glances met. Some vague instinct seemed to warn each of them that in a way they were rivals, and for an instant they appeared to be measuring each other's strength, as for some mortal combat—Drummond suffused, as to his handsome face, with suppressed excitement, Morton sternly calm and pallid.

"Pray do not forget, Mr. Drummond," the latter said steadily, "that Miss Effingham is an invalid. As her physician, I insist upon her being undisturbed."

The words, far from recalling Drummond to his senses, seemed to increase his agitation.

"And do not forget, sir," he retorted, "that my attitude towards Miss Effingham entitles me to some satisfaction, some explanation."

Morton simply bowed his head, covertly watching the young gentleman as he crossed the chamber. With his hand upon the door, Drummond paused and turned, whether for the desperate comfort of one more glance, or ultimate word of defiance is doubtful, since at that moment Romaine half rose upon her couch and clasped one of Morton's hands in both her own. The significant act so maddened its beholder that the last vestige of his self-control vanished. Returning swiftly upon his steps, he snatched a letter from his breast and held it quivering before the eyes of the shrinking girl.

"Romaine Effingham," he cried, "look at this letter! Look at it and let the sight of it restore you to your wits, if you have lost them! Do you recognize it? Do you remember how you wrote these lines to me within a month, these lines instinct with your great love, with your intense long-

ing for me to return to you? I am willing to stake my life that more impeded words were never sent to absent lover. There stands your signature! Do you deny it?"

She covered her face with her hands and moaned.

"You remember, then?" he added triumphantly. "Your mind is *not* deranged, but *bewitched!*"

She only moaned, trembling like a broken twig vibrating in the wind.

Then Morton spoke with the same stony calm of voice and feature:

"You have had your say, sir," he said. "I have permitted you to speak out of pity, but I am answerable to Mrs. Effingham for the welfare of her daughter, which is being jeopardized by such a tirade as this which you have seen fit to indulge in. I therefore request you—as her physician, I request you to respect Miss Effingham's condition, and leave the room."

Drummond raised his head and dealt Loyd Morton a glance which smote him to the heart.

"I go," he answered. "I leave her in peace; but as God is judge of us both, I fail to understand why you, who have enjoyed one all-absorbing love, and ought to be faithful to it, can have the heart to force yourself between my only love and me!"

And, with these significant words, he left the chamber.

Loyd Morton shivered as the door closed heavily upon his departing form, and he crept to the window, raised the drapery, and stood staring blindly out upon the darkening landscape.

For the first time since the beginning of his weird experience, the voice of conscience asserted itself, weakening his resolution to the extent of making a partial coward of him.

"God help me!" he mentally ejaculated; "would to heaven that I had foreseen this disastrous complication before I entered into a covenant with death! Far be it from me to interfere with the love and hope of any man. But what can I do now, if, as I believe, it is Paula's soul that has returned to comfort me in my loneliness? How can I give her up to any other man to love and cherish? Were I to betray her thus, outrage her confidence in me, and doom her to a spiritual hell on earth, how could I face her when at last we meet in the life to come? Heaven have mercy upon me and save me! rescue me from this awful doubt that the soul I love is *not* with me, is not incarnate here; that I am the victim of some Satanic wile that grants me the power to exert an infernal magnetism to the estrangement of fond and loyal hearts! O my God, rather let me die here and now, before I have consummated irreparable wrong!"

The desperate thought ended in a sharp gasp that voiced the surprise and almost superstitious awe which seized upon him as he felt a slender arm coil itself softly about his neck with soothing contact of cool flesh against his feverish cheek.

The gloom had deepened to darkness within the chamber, but in the deep embrasure of the window there lurked a faint after-glow of day, that ultimate flickering of our northern twilight that seems fraught alike with hinted promise and with lingering farewell. There is a witchery about the "sober livery" of that brief hour that lends itself to the imaginative soul and lays a magic spell upon the triteness of existence.

He knew that she had come to him, but for a moment he trembled in uncertainty.

"You are in doubt about me, Loyd?" she faltered, with a perspicacity that was the more startling by reason of her hesitation. "You think it best to relinquish all claim to me?"

"What think you yourself?" he asked in an agony of suspense.

"I am in doubt when your are."

"But when I am firm?"

"Then I feel that death itself cannot part us."

He wound his arms about her, and in return felt her hold upon him tighten with clinging trust; and thus for one supreme moment they stood.

"When you love, I love," she murmured; "when you waver, I waver. I am the slave of a magnetism of which you are the master."

"Hush, hush!" he gasped, assailed even with her arms about him, by the grawsome conviction which but a minute before had impelled him to call upon heaven to end his ill-starred career; "no, no! this is not magnetism! Banish the thought, dear love, and henceforth believe that it is by a special dispensation of Providence that we are once more united, never again to part!"

She nestled closer to him and laid her sweet head upon his breast in eloquent reliance.

"I believe, since you believe," she murmured.

A moment later there sounded a cautious knocking upon the door.

Morton loosened his embrace and crossed the chamber to answer the summons.

"Mr. Drummond begs Doctor Morton to join him immediately in the library upon a matter of importance," announced the servant.

Morton bowed his head in silence.

CHAPTER VII.

"Love, lend me wings to make my purpose swift,
As thou hast lent me wit to plot this drift!"

THE portentous interview in the library was held within closed doors, and at its conclusion the two gentlemen left the house by one of the casement windows of the room that gave upon the terrace. Through the gathered dusk they passed side by side, their blurred shadows tracking them in the faint radiance of the young moon. Side by side they crossed the lawn, bearing down towards the belt of woodland beyond which lay Drummond Lodge—two apparitions, voiceless and black. At last the blackness of the woods embraced them and they vanished.

Not until the dense umbrage of the budding trees was reached was a word exchanged between the ill-assorted pair. It was there, upon the fragrant hem of the grove, that Morton paused, removed his hat and mopped his brow, though the evening was damp and chill.

"I see no occasion for me to go farther," he remarked, a note of nervous irritation in his tone.

"I did not intend to bring you so far," replied Drummond; "but I wished to think of your proposition; to think before I gave an answer to your—your unnatural demand."

His companion listened to the words, his pallid face agleam in the wan twilight.

"Well," he muttered, "you have arrived at some conclusion?"

"I admit that I am curious to know the limit of your powers," was the reply, bitter with irony.

"I boast no special powers. I will simply try to do that which I have proposed."

Drummond broke off a spray of dogwood blossom and tossed it away unheeded.

"You understand," he said sternly, "understand thoroughly, that I insist upon complete satisfaction in the matter."

"I understand."

"That I must have the proof and testimony which I have named."

"I understand."

"You speak confidently."

"I speak as I feel—as I have reason to speak."

"As you *think* you have reason to speak," echoed Drummond, an ominous gloom shadowing his fierce eyes. "Well, sir, do your best—accomplish what you can—then come to me at any hour of the night. You may suit your own convenience. Between this hour and daybreak you will find a light burning which will guide you straight to me. You will find me alone and waiting—but, mark you! if you come to me with any trickery, any fabrication, any counterfeit proof, I shall detect you in your infamy, and shall be merciless; so beware! Likewise should you attempt to evade me in the humiliation of failure, I warn you that I shall be equally relentless."

Morton replied in a tense tone which betrayed the struggle for composure that he was undergoing.

"I do not fear you," he said, "your approbation or displeasure is alike a matter of indifference to me. In any case, though I admit but *one* to be possible, I shall come to you before daybreak."

Drummond drew up his stalwart figure to its full height and folded his arms.

"Under the circumstances, then," he observed with a sneer, "I should be unreasonable were I to encroach upon another instant of your precious time."

Perhaps his mockery was unheeded. Be that as it may, Morton had turned abruptly while he was speaking, and had begun rapidly to retrace his steps to the mansion beyond the lawn.

Upon the fringe of the wood, Colston Drummond stood watching the receding figure until, its lineaments mingling with the pervading gloom, it was lost to sight.

"Charlatan! fool!" he muttered. "I have given you the rope; go hang yourself!"

He turned upon his heel and pressed into the path that led across the copse, through which twinkled the lights of Drummond Lodge.

Suddenly he paused with clenched hands, and only the budding leaves and fronds were auditors of the groan that came, wrung from his inmost soul.

"My God! if she should fail me!"

Meanwhile dinner had been announced at Belvoir. Plenty of candles had been lighted to dispel the gloom. The butler stood at his post before the side-board, but as yet the four chairs placed about the table lacked occupants. The man glanced at the clock upon the mantel-piece and heaved a decorous sigh, doubtless in memory of the well-ordered days of his late master. At last, and just as the hands of the clock marked the half-hour after seven, Hubert Effingham appeared and requested the "faithful Adam" to serve the repast.

"Doctor Morton will dine with us," he said, and turned to meet his mother and Morton as they entered.

Mother and son had indulged in no little surmise as to the sudden disappearance of their two guests, and had delayed dinner until the last moment on their account. Morton's return, unattended, did not serve to elucidate matters, since he did not appear to be in a communicative frame of mind.

The pair had met him upon the terrace, where they had been strolling to and fro in the pale moonlight, talking in lowered tones and awaiting some development in the mystery. They had descried his dark figure as he crossed the lawn, coming from the direction of "Drummond Copse," as the belt of woodland separating the estates was familiarly called, and, with no slight sense of curiosity, awaited his arrival at the head of the steps. Their meeting might have seemed strained, but for Hubert Effingham's remark, which relieved the situation.

"If the dinner is spoiled, my dear Loyd," he said cheerily, "pray do not blame the cook; when guests stray away at the dinner-hour, who is responsible for the consequences? And, by the way, where is Colston? Have we to wait until his constitutional is over?"

"Mr. Drummond will not dine with us this evening," replied Morton, with an indifference, the assumption of which was painfully apparent. "And pardon me; I was in hopes that you would begin, and permit me to catch up with you, as—as I have so frequently done."

"The idea of obliging Loyd to apologize for his actions," interposed Mrs. Effingham, laughing, "when his privileges here are the privileges of his own house! Be off with you, you Hector, and tell Anton he may serve dinner."

Thereupon she linked her arm within that of the young doctor, and glanced up into his face with an affection beyond question.

"Why should I mention your privileges in my home, my dearest boy and almost son?" she asked. "Do I need to remind you of my darling Malcolm's love for you, or of the paternal fondness of that dear one who so soon followed my boy to the grave?"

She noted the nervous tremor of Morton's pallid lips, and hastened to remove the painful impression she had produced.

"Of course not!" she added; "more than ever, now, I account you a son. You have saved Romaine, and it is the debt of a mother's gratitude that I have to repay—if such requital be within human power. Oh, Loyd dear, you are again alone in the world! Come to me and fill the vacant place!"

"Of son?" he demanded in a tone, the hoarseness of which concealed its almost fierce eagerness.

"Of nothing less than son, you know it."

His dark eyes lighted with an inward fire that he was powerless to mask.

"God bless you!—mother," he answered, chokingly; "perhaps the hour is not far distant when I may ask requital for the life I have given you back, and put you to the test."

They had entered the lighted hall and she glanced with a slightly wondering start into his face, though she replied in the same fulness of soul,

"Bring me to the test."

Their entrance into the dining-room and the presence of Hubert put an end to the conversation, and dinner began, a single course of which gave ample proof that the atmosphere had cleared. Romaine was out of danger, indeed convalescent, and the awful suspense of the last twenty-four hours

was at an end. Mother and son presided in the very best of spirits, and Morton must have been morose indeed had he been able to withstand the contagion of their buoyant mood. Under the influence of their constantly reiterated gratitude for thefeat which they ascribed to his skill, of the genial atmosphere, combined with the excellent fare and wines, he warmed while some hint of hope and peace crept back into his tortured heart. Only once did the clutch of inexorable destiny seem laid upon him, causing his blood to halt in its channels, as Hubert exuberantly exclaimed,

"I see but one way, Loyd, and only one, in which you can be repaid for saving Romaine!"

"Relieve my mind by informing me, Hubert," remarked Mrs. Effingham with a smile; "I confess that I have cudgelled my brains in vain."

"By giving him what he has saved—by giving him Romaine!"

"And how about Colston?" laughed the lady in high good humor.

"I did not take him into the account," responded the young man; "at all events he should not object, under the circumstances."

"Which proves that you have never been in love, my boy."

They glanced at Morton, and were slightly chilled at the sternness of his face and the intensity with which he answered,

"Were it her will, I would gladly be Romaine's servant in love as I have been her servant in life and death."

It was as if a frigid wind had crossed the genial atmosphere, chilling their hearts as the mere passage of a current closes the sensitive blossoms of the deep sea. But the constraint was transient; they were used to Morton's moods, and ever were accustomed to make light of them; and in the kindness of their hearts they readily imagined a score of excuses for this particular one. The actual relief to the situation, however, presented itself in the sudden and unexpected apparition of Romaine herself upon the threshold of the dining-room. She stood between the parted draperies, the soft folds of her robe falling about her in the radiance of the candles.

Romaine's welcome back to her accustomed place at table was full of that exuberant congratulation natural to the situation. There was a general uprising to receive and lead her to the vacant chair, which had been set in place for Colston Drummond. Although Mrs. Effingham and Hubert simultaneously saluted the girl's wan cheeks, Romaine had eyes only for Morton as he bent before her to kiss the hand she involuntarily outstretched to him. Those eyes, so dark and limpid, seemed fairly to embrace the young doctor with their eloquent scrutiny. A conscious flush suffused his face, while an eager, hungry light flashed into his eyes, hitherto so dull and apathetic.

Romaine sank into the vacant chair and glanced about her with a happy sigh.

"How good it seems to be well again!" she exclaimed. "I feel as though I had been away from you all an age. Pray, how long is it since I sat here?"

"Just twenty-four hours, sister mine," replied Hubert.

"One day, only one brief day," she remarked, as it were, introspectively, "and yet in that short space of time I have lived through an eternity—such an eternity!"

Her voice fell almost to a whisper, and her eyes became fixed upon space with an indescribably dreamy inspection in their depths.

Although the dinner was practically at an end, Hubert seated himself beside her, watching her with an affectionate interest not unmixed with sadness. Mrs. Effingham and Morton, however, remained standing side

by side at the head of the table, and it was of the latter that the lady inquired in a swift undertone,

"Is it not a risk for her to have left her room so soon?"

"I think not," replied Morton, without removing his eyes from Romaine, upon whom they had rested intently since her appearance; "but I do not approve of her remaining here. See for yourself! The associations of the spot seem to be exerting some spell upon her already. Romaine," he said suddenly, perhaps in answer to the mother's anxious glance, "if I am to be your physician until you are out of all danger, you must obey me. You were imprudent to leave your room without my permission."

She raised her eyes quickly, smiling in happy submission, as she inquired,

"Must I go back again? Command! I am your dutiful patient."

"We will go into the conservatory, if you wish," Morton answered. "It is warmer there and less exposed to draughts; you shall inspect your favorite flowers, and then, I think, we shall have you retire for the night and rest."

She rose with the ready acquiescence of a docile child, and going to him, placed her arm within his.

"Come!" she said. "Of all things, I would like to show you my plants; I think you have not seen them for a long, long time." And with an animated smile, that somehow seemed pathetic, she led Morton away through the glass doors that opened from the dining-room into the spacious conservatory lying fragrant and dim in the rays of the crescent moon.

Hubert had risen as Romaine left the room, and stood with his hand resting upon the back of his chair, lost in troubled thought that mirrored itself upon his expressive face; at last, with sudden resolution, he conquered his painful indecision, and coming to Mrs. Effingham's side, touched her arm.

"Mother," he remarked, "Loyd is correct."

"Loyd is always correct," replied the lady in a startled way, that belied the confidence that her words implied.

"Yes, but he is correct upon one point which you and I, in our great love for Romaine, have been trying to evade during the whole of this endless day."

"What do you mean, Hubert?"

"I mean that Romaine's mind is affected."

"Merciful heaven!" cried the mother, the ready tears glittering in her anxious eyes, "how you utter my thoughts! My dear boy, what shall we do if such be the case?"

"I believe it to be but a temporary aberration, and Loyd thinks so, too," replied the young man, soothingly.

"But how can we tell? O Hubert, what suspense for us!"

"Yes; but we must bear it bravely, mother, hoping and praying for the best. All that we can do is to mind Loyd's commands, in regard to Romaine, to the letter. It must be our duty to see that nothing troubles or thwarts her."

"Of course!"

"Ah, that may mean more than you think."

"How so?"

"It may mean that we shall be forced to forbid Colston the house, or at least the privilege of seeing Romaine until she recovers."

"Colston!" exclaimed Mrs. Effingham, in pained amazement; "forbid Colston Drummond to enter our house!"

"Yes. An unfortunate scene has been enacted this afternoon in Ro-

maine's room between Colston and Loyd—of course in Romaine's presence. Then, later, there has been something mysterious going on between the two men, of what import I do not know."

"What can it be?"

"I say I do not know; but perhaps Loyd will confide in me. In the mean time I have perfect confidence that he is conscientiously doing his best for Romaine's welfare. You can see for yourself, that her consideration even for us, her mother and brother, is second to her sudden attachment for Loyd."

The significance of the words failed not duly to impress Mrs. Effingham. Her slight color faded, leaving her face ashy to the very lips.

"Can you mean," she said, with evident effort, "that some mysterious mental distemper has interested her in Loyd to the prejudice of Colston?"

"That is my suspicion."

"You think that her love has turned to Loyd?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"What would be the consequences of her return to reason?"

"Mother dear," replied Hubert Effingham, manfully, "we had better not torment ourselves with considerations for the future; we have our hands full with the present."

Meanwhile Romaine and Morton had wandered out of ear-shot of this significant conversation, into the depths of the conservatory. They had paused beneath a luxuriant *lapageria*, and the girl had raised caressing hands, drawing downward a cluster of its frosty bells to her lips.

The startling likeness in tint between the wan face and the ghostly blossoms, as they gleaned side by side in the moonlight, so painfully suggested the sculptured pallor of death, that Morton caught her hands in his and drew her quickly into his embrace, as he would snatch her from the brink of the grave. She resigned herself to his clasp, almost rough in its passion, without a tremor, while she glanced with a wondering smile up into his face.

"I associate those cold, scentless flowers with a certain funeral," he said with a shudder that caused her to nestle involuntarily closer to him; "I saw them near you once, and God knows I would never see them so placed again!"

"Yes, I have worn them in my hair," she said, "and they were thought beautiful with my white lace gown."

"They were laid upon your breast when I saw them last," he muttered, "and they were cut from this very vine."

"Indeed? I do not recollect."

"No, and I would not have you recollect that time, since we are united again."

"United again?" she echoed dreamily. "O Loyd, teach me to understand how we have ever been separated!"

"Rather let me teach you how fondly I love you," he whispered; "let me convince you that every heart-throb of ours distances the past—the dead past and its shadows. Let your very soul be witness to my avowal when I tell you that I love you! Paula, I love you!"

"Paula!"

She spoke the name after him in no surprise, with no intonation of perplexity. It left her lips lingeringly, as though its sound was pleasing to her ear.

"Yes, Paula," he answered eagerly; "you are Paula, Paula to me, but Romaine to the rest of the world."

"How strange," she faltered with that dreamy smile, as if fascinated.

"But you comprehend," he insisted—"you appreciate the distinction?"
"Oh, yes."

"Answer to every name in Christendom, if you will, save Paula; you are Paula alone for me!"

His impassioned emphasis seemed to charm her. Her rapt gaze enveloped his head as she lay in his arms, and there was a smile of ineffable serenity upon her lips.

"How you love that name!" she murmured.

"*You* taught me to love it."

"I must have, since you say so."

"You are Paula."

"Yes, I am Paula," she replied as one echoes a dictation; then, with a half-regretful sigh, "What would I not give to be able to recall the past!"

"You will recall everything in due time," he said soothingly; "I will help you."

"After all," she said after a pause, "what is the past, compared with the present? It seems like an earth-life which I have left behind; the present is heaven."

"Paula, my own true darling!" he panted in ecstasy, "you recognize me; you love me!"

"I love you, Loyd."

He bent his head to kiss the calmly smiling lips, when she raised her hand to stroke, with fond caress, his hair.

A flash like miniature lightning dazed his sight as her hand passed upward; it was simply the gleam of a diamond upon her finger; but through its white sheen peered the face of Colston Drummond, distorted with a grimace of mocking warning, and he reeled from his seventh heaven to earth, felled by that tiny shaft.

He loosened his hold upon her, and caught her hand, riveting his burning eyes upon the gem, that returned the glare with flashes of ruby fire.

"You must not wear this ring!" he exclaimed; "I cannot bear to see it upon your dear hand."

Her startled glance left his face and rested upon the exquisite jewel.

"You do not like the ring?" she inquired in a puzzled way.

"It is not a question of my like or dislike," he replied with increasing eagerness, almost with impatience. "I did not place it upon your finger; it does not belong to you, Paula."

"Oh, then take it away!" she cried, hastily twisting off the circlet; "I hate it now, although I thought it so beautiful."

Perhaps it was the utter absence of regret in her tone that brought that triumphant glitter to his eyes, as he accepted the ring and slipped it upon the little finger of his left hand.

"It shall return whence it came," he said unsteadily. "It shall trouble you no more; but in its stead you shall wear this ring, these pearls. Paula, do you not recognize them?"

As he spoke, he produced a plain gold hoop, set with three perfect pearls, and held it before her eyes.

"Pearls!" she murmured sadly; "pearls are ill-fated; they mean tears."

He cast his arm about her waist and drew her to him, still holding the ring within range of her vision.

"All portents, all anguries, all superstitions fail in our case!" he cried

exultantly. "We are exempt from all baleful influences now! These pearls may *once* have signified tears, but now there are no more tears whence they came; they are petrified, and symbolize our happy reunion. In this supreme moment of our love, try to recollect—Paula, do you not recognize these pearls?"

A spasm of actual pain crossed the beautiful face, the result of intense mental exertion.

"O Loyd, I cannot recollect!" she faltered piteously; "and yet—Did you not promise to help me to recall the past?"

"Yes, my darling!" he exclaimed, his passion exceeding all bounds; "and I will fulfil that promise when we have wearied of the blessed present! A new promise I will make you here and now, and that is never again to torture you with unavailing considerations; only tell me once again that you love me with all your renewed strength, with all your purified soul!"

She raised her arms and wound them about his neck.

"Loyd, I love you," she answered steadily; "I love you—love you as the angels in heaven love!"

"Of whom you are one!"

He kissed her upon the lips—a long, rapturous kiss, thrilling with the welcome of his yearning heart; with such rapture only could he have kissed the one who had been his bride, returned to him from the immensity of some awful danger or from the shadow of the grave.

As such, and in all good faith, he kissed the woman lying in his arms, in all reason believing her his loved and lost one sent back to him from the vague realms of eternity.

Suddenly he raised his head and looked into her face with something akin to fright, actuated doubtless by the shadow of a last doubt upon his certitude; as a fleeting remnant of cloud-rack after a night of storm will sometimes fleck the serenity of a perfect dawn.

Would there be a blush upon her cheek after that impassioned salute? And, if there were, would not it portend an agitation born of maiden modesty? His suspicious heart assured him that no such tell-tale hue dyes the brow in holy wedlock. And he could have cried aloud in his exceeding joy to find the sweet face as untinged as the ghostly flower-bells that hung above it.

He placed the ring of pearls upon her finger whence the flashing diamond had been removed, and kissed it into place; and she, with fond humility, received the kiss from the jewelled pledge, and returned it to his lips.

Then they passed, with their arms entwined about each other, through the dimly lighted rooms and up the stairs to the chamber, where he surrendered her into the care of her waiting-maid.

"You will not leave the house to-night?" she murmured, as their hands unclasped at the threshold.

"Not to-night," he answered softly, "nor ever, till you go with me!"

For the instant he forgot his obligation to Colston Drummond that night; but, when her chamber-door had closed and the diamond upon his hand flashed a defiant ray at the lamp upon the newel-post, he bethought himself of his inevitable engagement. However, he did not blench.

"I am master of the ring!" he murmured in triumph. "One more effort, and I go to Drummond Lodge within the hour, prepared to remove the last impediment from my path!"

At that moment he descried the figure of Mrs. Effingham crossing the

hall below in the direction of the library. With rapid steps he descended the stairs and followed her. He was in search of her, since from her hand must come the final weapon destined to silence his rival.

CHAPTER VIII.

“No, no, although
The air of Paradise did fan the house,
And angels offle’d all : I will be gone—
Come, night ; end, day !
For with the dark, poor thief, I’ll steal away.”

WHETHER or not he entertained decided views regarding the power of his personal magnetism over Romaine, it is certain that Morton felt no perturbation, no uncertainty of touch, in his management of her. Loth, as we have seen him, to admitting that he possessed any so-called mesmerism, he was convinced that he held the key to her volition, and that he need have no further anxiety on that score. Come what might, no matter what contingency might arise, he was persuaded that she would second his wishes, would obey him in any event. Why should it not be so if, as he strove to believe—nay, as he was obliged to believe or perish—she were actuated by the spirit of his wife? Doubtless he would have been stronger in his belief if that belief had not resorted to the make-shift of interrogation. He was vaguely conscious of the weakness, of the masked doubt, that a question implies—especially when it is a question of faith; and yet his very inability to answer such question satisfactorily lent him a species of Dutch courage that materially assisted him to tread his dubious way. As the belated way-farer whistles in the night or affrightedly calls upon his common-sense to assign suspicious sounds to the harmlessness of natural causes, so he groped his way, fondly believing the darkness light, satisfied if an unanswered query dispelled a doubt.

If, then, he experienced no uneasiness as regarded his management of Romaine, he was forced to admit great apprehension as to the successful control of Mrs. Effingham at the decisive moment. Granting his power of magnetism over the daughter, he had reason seriously to doubt the virtue of his occult gifts if applied to the mother.

Something of this moral hesitancy must have mirrored itself upon his countenance as he thrust aside the drapery that concealed the library door and found himself in the presence of the lady.

Serena Effingham had seated herself at the writing-table, arranged paper, and taken pen in hand; but, as the sound of Morton’s footsteps reached her, she hastily dropped the pen and removed a tiny rose colored shade from the candle, the better to scan the intruder’s face.

“I disturb you,” he said shortly, in a tone that promptly secured her curious attention.

“No,” she answered; “as you see, I am not engaged, I have not begun to write. What is it, Loyd? You have something of importance to say to me?”

She half rose as she spoke, but he motioned her back to her seat.

“Yes, something of importance to say,” he replied; “a request to ask, which you can grant nowhere so well as here, since you must write.”

“Write—what? To whom?”

“To Mr. Drummond.”

"To Colston ! He may be here during the evening ; I do not doubt he will be."

"Colston Drummond will not call this evening."

Hubert's insinuations, together with the mysterious behavior of the two men earlier in the evening, recurred to her mind with unpleasant vividness ; yet she hesitated to divulge alike her son's and her own involuntary espionage upon their guests. Consequently she had recourse to temporization for present safety.

"Colston would be remiss in his duty if he failed to inquire for Romaine before he slept," she remarked nervously. "Whatever may be his faults—and he has as few as any man I know—indifference is not one of them ; at least, indifference as regards those he loves."

It was like her valiantly to defend the absent, and she spoke from her heart.

Morton watched her with his soul in his eyes, though he turned a shade more pallid, while the lines about his lips grew more tense as each word of hers broke the silence.

"Why should you defend him ?" he asked almost harshly.

"Why ?" she faltered, at a loss for words.

"Such defence as yours implies some suspicion."

"Why so ?"

"Because it was wholly unprovoked."

"Loyd," the lady exclaimed, "you dislike Colston !"

"Why should I ?"

"Do you not ?"

"No ! He is almost a stranger to me ; I am not called upon either to like or dislike him. I do not belong to his sphere in life ; he has simply crossed mine as a thousand and one persons meet me professionally and part, never to meet again."

"But you are likely to meet him frequently in the future."

"I think not. I confess that I am not so completely indifferent to his welfare as to hope he might some day have need of my services, which would be the only opportunity we could have of meeting."

Mrs. Effingham bit her lip to conceal some rising emotion, and toyed absently with the pen.

"Let us dismiss him from our thoughts for the present," she said with a sigh, "and attend to your request."

"I would willingly comply," Morton remarked, "but unfortunately we cannot dismiss Mr. Drummond, since he is intimately connected with my request."

She turned a swift, startled glance upon the speaker.

"Yes," he continued, coming close to the table and leaning above it; "I wish you to write to Mr. Drummond, forbidding him to come here—for the present ; at least, forbid him to intrude upon Romaine until she is stronger and better able to bear his importunity."

"Loyd ! what can you mean ?"

"Exactly what I say. Either Mr. Drummond vacates the field to me, or I vacate the field to Mr. Drummond and such other physician as you may choose to call in. I cannot, and will not, suffer my efforts to be balked by his interference. You have placed Romaine in my charge to cure, and I will do my utmost to secure the desired end so long as I am undisturbed ; any physician demands so much. If you consider me unreasonable, I beg you to say so frankly. No candid opinion, honestly uttered, ever gave

offence or caused a breach in friendship. At all events, it shall not in my case."

The heroism of his words was belied by his tone, the expression of his face, his very attitude.

If Colston Drummond's rights at Belvoir were maintained in spite of Morton's semi-truthful plea, the day would be lost to him, and he knew it. If Drummond held his ground, he must retreat. He felt the solid earth beneath him changing to a shifting quick-sand, from which only a miracle could save him. If Drummond were restored to Romaine, he must leave her, and, in leaving her, leave that chimerical love to which he had become enslaved, abandon his spirit-wife—and go mad, for aught he knew to the contrary.

The suspense of that supreme moment aged him appreciably, while the reaction that succeeded well-nigh deprived him of self-control.

He could have cried aloud in the exuberance of his joy, could have flung himself upon the earth, or indulged in any other fantastic mode of relief when at last Mrs. Effingham tremulously replied,

"Come what may, you shall remain in command here. O Loyd, do not desert us in this the eleventh hour of our anxiety! In heaven's name, stand by us until your good work is accomplished! You have dragged Romaine back from the threshold of death; sustain her until the threatening portals are closed and she is safe!"

She rose as she spoke, with outstretched arms, and he hastened to her to receive her embrace.

She clung to him hysterically for a moment, then sank into her chair and with an effort caught up the pen in her trembling fingers.

"Dictate—I will write," she faltered sobbingly.

It was Morton's very good fortune that Mrs. Effingham never so much as dreamed of suspecting his perfect disinterestedness in her daughter's cause. In intrusting Romaine's life to his care, she placed in his keeping that which she considered infinitely more precious than the salvation of her own immortal soul, since she unhesitatingly considered her welfare here and hereafter as second to that of her children, such was the perfection of her maternal self-denial. From long association with her, Morton was well aware of this fact; consequently it was from prudential motives that he stepped behind her chair to conceal the guilty triumph that distorted his countenance. Had she seen his face at that moment, the depth of his deceit would have been instantly apparent to her, and this he was wise enough to know. Her woman's instinct would have warned her that he did not love Romaine for herself, that he was actuated in his devotion by some ulterior motive in which Romaine held no share. At least, he knew such to be the case, knew that his success in the future depended upon his keeping that knowledge an inviolate secret. He was well aware that the treason against Colston Drummond was vividly depicted upon his face, and that in perfect concealment of it resided his only hope of further communion with the spirit of his wife, that reincarnation in which he now as devoutly believed as he believed in his own existence.

Be it said in his favor that he was not wholly selfish in his conduct, notwithstanding the insatiable yearning of his soul for the affinity from which he had been separated, since he felt himself to be responsible for having summoned that spirit back to earth, for having conjured it from the realms of bliss through the spell of his great love, even overcoming its reluctance to return by his importunity; but, having succeeded in his invocation, hav-

ing secured the reincarnation, how could he abandon the imprisoned spirit? What right had he to leave it to pine among strangers?

What was the spirit of his wife to Drummond, or Drummond to the spirit of his wife? They had never met upon earth, and now, wrapped in a veil of invisibility, how could that spirit hope for the sympathy and love upon which it had fed, and for the renewal of which it had returned to earth?

Could he in duty, in honor, in love, desert the habitation which that blessed spirit had chosen, and leave it enslaved to a doom beside which total annihilation would seem paradise?

A thousand times, no! As the bonds of wedlock had made him responsible for the welfare of his wife, even so had this covenant with death rendered him accountable for the peace of her spirit.

Such was his self-acquittal for the high-handed deceit which he was practising upon his best of friends.

A portion at least of this defence sped involuntarily through his mind as he stood behind Mrs. Effingham's chair; and, thanks to it, he was able to regain some measure of composure, so that, when she faintly repeated the request that he should dictate the letter to Drummond, he replied with a reasonable degree of command,

"Write as your heart dictates."

"My heart fails me," she answered piteously. "I can find no words in which to forbid the man, who was to have been my son-in-law within the month, to enter my house."

It seemed to Morton then as if the threatening quick-sands were creeping about his feet again. If he failed to secure this dismissal, all would be lost.

He might go to Drummond with the ring, feeling himself well armed, but a vulnerable point would still be exposed as long as Drummond could freely seek Mrs. Effingham and demand an explanation. Perfect success to his scheme was in view, and he must secure it at all hazards!

He stepped from his concealment and boldly faced the lady, a horn of the bull in either hand.

"Believe me, Mrs. Effingham," he said sternly, "this is no child's-play; we have arrived at a decisive moment, which is not to be gainsaid. Permit me to present the question from another point of view. Suppose that I had failed in my management of Romaine's case; that you saw her steadily growing worse under my treatment instead of better; that you were satisfied that I was mistaken and surely courting death for her; would you not dismiss me ere it was too late, and summon one whose skill could save your child? Answer me that!"

"O Loyd!" she cried, "how can you ask me? How can you find it in your heart to torture me so?"

"And how can you place impediments in the way of my saving Romaine? I am simply amazed that you will run any risk where Romaine is concerned. As I said before, I now repeat—either Mr. Drummond assumes direction here, or I do; it is for you to choose between us."

"I beseech you, do not be unreasonable, Loyd; you are the physician. Have I not given you every proof of my confidence? Pursue your way undisturbed."

"That is out of the question," he answered steadily, "out of the question, while Mr. Drummond is permitted to come here. His influence upon Romaine in her present sensitive condition is disastrous. If he comes here, he will insist upon seeing her; and, if she sees him, I will not answer for the consequences. I grant you that the gentleman is not to blame for the

baleful influence he exerts—indeed, I entirely exonerate him; but the fact remains that, for some mysterious reason, Romaine is reduced almost to frenzy at the very sight of him. Had you been in her chamber this afternoon when he forced an entrance there and defied my authority, you would have been satisfied that your daughter's life is a matter of a few hours' duration if she is left to his mercy!"

It was a bold stroke, and it struck home.

Hubert's hint of the "unfortunate scene" that had been enacted in Romaine's presence that afternoon recurred to Mrs. Effingham's mind most opportunely for Morton. Without further parley, she drew a sheet of paper to her, caught up the pen, and wrote in breathless haste the following entreaty:

"MY DEAR COLSTON: I beg you to appreciate the depth of my solicitude for Romaine, when I tell you that I am more than willing to assume all the blame for the pain I am forced to inflict upon you. You already know something of the critical condition of my darling child; and yet I venture to say that it is far more critical than you suspect. Complete rest and total freedom from every description of excitement are indispensable to her recovery. I shall keep her strictly removed from all social intrusion, even of the most intimate kind; and I must beg you, for the present, not to attempt to see her. Indeed, I will so far hazard the endurance of your friendship and love for me as to beseech you not even to come to the house until she is out of all danger. You may deem me a fanatic in my maternal anxiety—perhaps I am; but nevertheless I ask you to respect a mother's wishes and second a mother's prayers. I take this, possibly unwarrantable, step entirely upon my own responsibility, persuaded that your dear, noble heart will sympathize with and understand me. Hubert shall bring you daily tidings of our dear one; and, in the hope that this moral quarantine may be of brief duration, believe me,

"Ever your fondly attached friend, SERENA EFFINGHAM."

The manner in which she reached her signature suggested the broken gait of an exhausted animal that has been lashed almost beyond endurance, yet accomplishes the behest of its master with its ultimate gasp. The pen fell from her nerveless hand, and she sank back in her chair with a quivering sigh.

"Read what I have written," she gasped. "It may be utterly unintelligible."

For answer, Morton folded the sheet and placed it in an envelope.

"Address this, if you please," he said.

She obeyed his request, limply forcing herself to make the effort; and, as the pen once more fell from her fingers, she glanced up at him with a haggard piteousness in her eyes.

"Will you not read what I have written?" she asked again.

"I see no reason why I should," he answered. "I have no wish to intrude. You are simply doing your duty towards your daughter; such a proceeding is not open to criticism."

"I only hope and pray that Colston will regard my attitude in the same magnanimous light," she sighed, taking a little heart at his words.

"He will if he is truly a lover and a gentleman," was the daring reply.

Mrs. Effingham rose and, crossing the room, opened one of the casements to admit a breath of the cool night air; and at that moment a clock somewhere about the house chimed ten.

"It is so late," she remarked sadly, "that there is little danger of poor Colston's intruding upon us to-night. We may as well defer sending the note until to-morrow."

She was looking absently forth upon the engloomed landscape, to where, beyond the crest of the low-lying hills, the blood-red segment of the moon was sinking to rest; consequently she failed to note the inward fire that flashed up in Morton's haggard eyes as he hastened to reply,

"I will take a short walk before I sleep, as is my custom, and leave the note at Drummond Lodge."

She turned with an apprehensive start towards the writing-table, as if to claim the note, perhaps with a view to its destruction; but it had disappeared.

Divining her intention, Morton touched his breast. "It is here," he said, "you may trust me to deliver it safely. Romaine has requested me to remain here over night," he added, going towards the door that opened upon the hall, "and I must respect her wish. Doubtless I shall find Hubert up when I return."

He was about to leave the room, when the lady extended her arms and he was obliged to return and receive her embrace.

"Good-night," she murmured; "I shall look in at Romaine and then retire; for I am completely worn out with the events of this day. Good-night, Loyd. Ah, my dear boy! you little know what comfort it is to have you to depend upon. I have trusted you with Romaine's precious life, and you have not failed me; now I intrust to your keeping her future welfare and happiness. Be faithful. God bless you. Good-night!"

Words of strong significance they seemed to Morton, in his exalted mood. Could it be that they implied a suspicion of apostasy on his part?

Like many another constitutionally upright man, laboring in strained circumstances, he felt his "conscience hanging about the neck of his heart;" and, like many another good man, overwhelmed by the force of circumstances, he left himself no time to listen to that conscience. He grasped his hat and hurried out into the night. As he passed one of the uncurtained windows of the drawing-room, whence a belt of light fell out upon the terrace from the shaded lamps within, he paused and half involuntarily drew Mrs. Effingham's letter to Drummond from his pocket. He had not sealed it, and, as he drew the folded sheet from its envelope, he experienced a twinge of shame-faced regret that he had not read it in the lady's presence, as she had besought him to do. The desire—nay, the imperative necessity—had been with him at the time to satisfy himself to what extent her words had coincided with his requirements; but somehow he could not have brought himself to read the missive with her confiding eyes resting upon him.

Now, however, with an assurance born of the encompassing darkness, his eyes flew over the lines, gathering a gleam of hungry satisfaction in their depths as they read.

"Indeed, I will so far hazard the endurance of your friendship and love for me as to beseech you not even to come to the house until she is out of all danger," he read, almost audibly. "Good! good! Nothing could be better! We are safe from his intrusion, at least for the precious present! Ah," he concluded, with savage, mirthless humor, "I am greatly mistaken in his high-mettle if she has not made him his quietus with a bare bodkin!"

He returned the letter to his pocket and hurried away to the steps that led down to the lawn, casting one backward, furtive glance at the lighted windows.

Fair-haired Achilles, armed cap-a-pie, could not have led his troops against Troy with more perfect faith in his invulnerability, in more profound assurance of his powers to vanquish, than did Morton hasten through the dew-drenched woodland that separated Belvoir from Drummond Lodge. He gave no heed to the clinging briars, no thought to the roots and stubble that vainly essayed to bar his passage. It is even doubtful if he kept to the slightly defined path; there was a single light aglow beyond the trees, towards which he bore with feverish haste. He had lost all sense of physical discomfort or opposition; it was as if, dis-carnate, his spirit winged impetuous flight towards the goal of its desires.

As he approached the dim mansion lying low amidst dense shrubbery, he descried a small star set low and somewhat in advance of the signal light, like some strange winged glow-worm poised in air. Soon his eager eyes were able to detach from the environing gloom the outlines of a tall man, standing with folded arms, a lighted cigar between his lips. Some instinct peculiar to his excited condition informed Morton that the solitary figure was that of Colston Drummond—long before recognition was possible.

"So he, too, has suffered an anxious moment!" he thought, an overpowering throb of triumph almost suffocating him.

A minute later the two men stood confronting each other.

The moon had set, and in the darkness a brisk, chill wind was busy among the tree-tops. Near by an owl hooted dismally, and receiving answer from the distance, hooted again in eerie ululation.

"Well?" queried Drummond, with difficulty disguising a thrill of surprise.

"I have kept my appointment," answered Morton, "earlier than I thought; earlier, probably, than you expected me."

"Well?"

"I am the bearer of a message—a note from Mrs. Effingham."

"Follow me."

Drummond threw away his cigar and led the way across the sodden grass to the open casement window, within which burned the light. It was a charming room, decorated with trophies of the chase. From floor to ceiling the walls were draped with fish-seines festooned upon antlers. Groups of arms from every quarter of the globe, glistened upon the various panels, while ancient and modern panoplies scintillated in every nook and corner. Beside a table shrouded in dull gray velvet, and littered with books, papers, and smoking-materials, Drummond paused and turned to face the shadow that followed him.

No word was exchanged, while in breathless silence he accepted and read to its close the letter which Morton had brought. Without comment he laid it upon the table, then bent his keen, stern glance upon the messenger.

"This letter is but a part of our compact," he said, each distinctly uttered word cutting the silence like a knife.

"I agreed to bring you this letter from Mrs. Effingham," Morton answered, defiantly, "and your engagement-ring from"—

"Well? You have brought it?"

"I have."

Drummond recoiled a step, casting out his hand behind him and grasping the table for support.

"Great God!" burst from his tensely drawn lips; "I—I—

"You recognize the ring?"

Morton had slipped the circlet from his finger and held it before Drummond's eyes, twinkling in the lamp-light.

"This is some jugglery!" gasped the wretched man; "some infernal witchcraft! I—I refuse to"—

"This is your ring!"

A pause of awful import ensued, broken only by the weird hubbuboo of the owls.

"Mr. Drummond," Morton continued at length, his voice fairly startling the silence, "I have fulfilled my part of the compact. I have brought you undeniable proof that for the present, at all events, your attentions to Miss Effingham are"—

"Silence!" gasped Drummond, between his ghastly lips.

"Are distasteful to her," proceeded Morton, steadily, but with no note of triumph in his tone. "Your part of the compact involves your relinquishing all claim upon Belvoir, even as a visitor. I have accomplished my part; as a gentleman you"—

"Silence!" thundered Drummond, his whole being vibrant with an overwhelming fury. "Out of my sight! or by the living God I will not be responsible for what I may do! Never fear that I shall not abide by my part of the compact! But as there is justice in heaven, I will never rest until I have probed this damnable mystery to the heart! Now, go! before the sight of you reduces me to a ravening beast! Go, before I tear your heart out, and by drawing your blood, deprive you of the power of sorcery! Out of my sight!"

Morton's return to Belvoir was effected at the height of his speed. His interview with Drummond had unmanned him; while the conscience that hung about the neck of his heart seemed to be strangling his life out in its deadly clutch. The owls, winging breast to breast, pursued him, and even the very wind caught up their vague denunciation and hurled it about his ears. Only the twinkling lights of Belvoir recalled him from the verge of madness, from the black Gehenna of his accusing soul.

CHAPTER IX.

"Have I caught thee, my heavenly jewel? Why, now let me die, for I have liv'd long enough: this is the period of my ambition."

ROMAINE EFFINGHAM's convalescence was as rapid as the advent of summer that year. As the brief April days glided into May, she grew strong and well again; sound physically, at all events. Her mental condition remained a matter of conjecture to those who watched her with anxious hearts. Apparently she was perfectly herself, save for her infatuation for Morton which, after all, was scarcely a flattering view of the ease to take. Naturally there was no reason why she should not fall in love with the young physician, setting Drummond's undeniable claims aside; but that Drummond should be set aside, for no apparent cause, in favor of Morton, argued a distemper which perhaps might most easily be placed to the account of mental aberration. It was evident that something must be seriously wrong with her that she should wholly and completely ignore the existence of her affianced lover. She never mentioned him, while if, in the common course of conversation his name chanced to be uttered, which was not often the case for obvious reasons, she maintained as unaffected an indifference as if the name of some stranger, in whom by no chance could she be interested, had been called in question.

As a matter of course Mrs. Effingham indulged in a purely sentimental view of the singular situation. If she were not betrayed into saying so, in so many words, she was convinced that as Romaine's health strengthened, her mind would resume its sovereignty, her former predilections and affections would duly re-assert themselves, and as a consequence, her dormant love for Drummond would awake and claim its idol, which had simply suffered temporary eclipse, not obliteration. The good lady felt persuaded that Romaine's love for her betrothed was dormant, not defunct.

On the other hand, man-like, Hubert Effingham was of opinion—and, true son of his father, he had the courage of his opinions—that either his sister's mind was hopelessly deranged, her unwarrantable neglect of Drummond giving ample proof of the incipience of the baleful distemper, or else she was making herself a glaring example of that frailty which is imputed to woman. Standing between the horns of a dilemma which he had evolved from his independent consideration of the question, he was satisfied that he had rather accept the former position, painful as it must be to him, than force himself to believe Romaine guilty of an inconstancy as reprehensible as it was unjustifiable. Setting aside his strong fraternal regard for Morton, Hubert esteemed Drummond one of God's noblemen, as out of doubt he was. Had Morton been the favored one primarily, Hubert would have been content; but such was his sense of justice he could not passively stand by and see Morton, deeply as he loved and respected him, usurp the rights and place of one whom he had no reason to regard with a lighter love and respect.

Such being the case, he felt himself called upon to probe the mystery and right the wrong, if wrong there were, while his mother remained in optimistic apathy. He kept his counsel and patiently awaited his opportunity.

One perfect spring morning, perhaps a week removed from that dark and perplexing day that had befallen Belvoir, Hubert met Romaine as she emerged from the house accompanied by a splendid mastiff in leash, evidently prepared for a tour of the gardens and the surrounding park. Loyd Morton had gone into the city for the purpose of making further arrangements with his friend Chalmers to attend to his practice indefinitely. For reasons best known to himself, he considered his presence indispensable at Belvoir, and no incentive had been offered him to think otherwise.

The present was the first occasion upon which brother and sister had met, since Romaine's illness, free of the surveillance of Morton. It was surely an opportunity not to be neglected.

"You are going for a walk?" inquired Hubert, engagingly.

"Yes, for our first walk, as in the good old times! Eh, Molossus?" Romaine replied, with a gay smile that embodied much of the vernal buoyancy of the morning, stooping as she spoke to stroke the tawny velvet of the dog's head.

"May I bear you company?"

She hesitated an instant, with that fascinating archness which was hers to employ with telling effect.

"Well," she remarked, "I have no objection to your company if Molossus has not; but you see we have so long been deprived of each other's companionship that—well, we are just a trifle averse to intruders. You see it seems an age since we were free and alone together."

As if to second her words the great animal pressed closely into the folds of her gown, looking up into her face the while with eloquent affection.

"The old traitor!" laughed Hubert; "what would he have done but for

my devotion while you were ill? For the time being he transferred all his love to me."

"Ah, but, my dear boy, I always told you that Molossus is simply human; he feels like all of us, that first love is always the best; we return to it as if by instinct."

"Do we?" inquired Hubert sharply, scarcely able to conceal the thoughts that were uppermost in his mind; "do *you* find it to be true?"

"Why should I not?" she answered, with the most innocent of smiles; then, bending to the dog, she added, "Come, Molossus, we will permit this young unbeliever to trespass upon our privacy, just this once, if only to convince him how enduring a first love is."

So, side by side, the three companions passed down the steps and strolled away through the broad garden-paths, whence the crocuses and snow-drops had retired to give place to hyacinths and tulips, standing in serried lines, like small armies gorgeous in fresh uniforms. There was a general bowering of rose-trees in the sun, while the perfume of shy violets was borne far and wide upon the pregnant air. It was a day of days, a halcyon day, instinct with proud summer's boast, when birds have cause to sing.

They walked along in congenial silence, the mastiff sniffing at the trim box-edging of the path, or ever and anon making abortive lunges at some new-fledged butterfly that, disturbed at their approach, winged its devious flight sunward.

Presently, after much cautious preparation, Hubert broke the charmed silence by remarking, "I have been at Drummond Lodge several times since you were ill, Romaine."

"Yes?" she replied, half unconsciously, "you found them well there?"

"Mrs. Drummond is as well as any hopeless invalid can be. Colley has gone away."

He set his eyes keenly upon her face as he spoke. Romaine was looking straight before her calmly, fancy-free.

"Gone away?" she echoed; "where?"

"No one at the Lodge seems to know."

"Not even his mother?"

"No."

She started forward suddenly, stooping to pick a tiny sprig of forget-me-not that gemmed the border.

"The very first of the season!" she exclaimed in childish delight; "you dear little blossoms! how dared you venture here before there is even a rose-bud to bear you company? Here, Hubert," she cried, "you shall wear them!"

She was about to attach the spray to the lapel of his coat, when she surprised a look of keen disappointment, almost of chagrin upon his face.

"You do not like them!" she murmured, turning sad in a moment, as an April day is obscured.

He took her hands in his gently, but there was a note of firmness in his voice, as he said,

"It is not to the flowers that I object, but to the way in which you slight their meaning."

"What can you mean?" she asked in a puzzled, nearly pained way.

"You are forgetful, Romaine."

"Of what?"

"Of your duty."

She turned pale and started back so suddenly that the mastiff, startled likewise, uttered a deep-mouthed growl.

"Of what do you accuse me?" she cried piteously. "O Hubert, my brother! what have I done?"

"What are you leaving undone?" he persisted rashly. "Ask your heart, and let it answer me—your best friend—answer me honestly."

She made a movement as though she were groping in the darkness, which young Effingham was too eager and excited to notice.

"I—I do not understand," she faltered.

"What month is this, Romaine? Is it not the month of May?"

"I think it is."

"Then what event, what happy event, was to have happened in this month, *shall* happen if God wills?"

"My marriage," she sighed.

"Yes, yes," he cried earnestly; "your marriage, dear—your marriage with whom?"

She twisted the blue-starred sprig between her white fingers until it wilted.

"You say you are my best friend, Hubert?" she murmured.

"You should know it, dear."

"Then I will confide in you. If—if my marriage is to take place this month—"

"Yes, yes, this month! Whom are you to marry?"

"Loyd."

The name escaped her blanched lips almost inaudibly; but his eager ear caught it, and he recoiled from her with a gasp, as though she had stung him.

She wavered for an instant, then flung out her hands blindly, as if grasping for support.

"Oh, take me into the house!" she moaned; "I am ill again."

He sprang to her side just in time to feel her delicate weight in his arms; but she did not quite lose consciousness, possibly because, in swift contrition, he whispered,

"Of course you shall marry Loyd, darling, if you will." While under his breath he added, "God forgive me, never again will I hazard her precious life, come what may! But, in Heaven's name, what does it all mean? I am satisfied that her mind is *not* deranged!"

Upon his return to Belvoir, Doctor Morton was surprised and alarmed to find his patient restless from sudden fever. And thereupon he registered a solemn oath never again to leave her, it mattered not how fared his clientage.

The excitement caused by Romaine's ill turn fortunately proved a false alarm. There could be no gainsaying the magic of Morton's presence. The moment she saw him, every trace of the mysterious agitation left her, the feverish symptoms vanished as suddenly as they had appeared, and, after a few gentle words of welcome, which induced his promise that he would remain within call, she lapsed into profound, healthful slumber, from which she awoke sufficiently refreshed to appear at dinner in her usual gay spirits.

Poor Hubert found himself more hopelessly mystified than ever regarding his sister's incomprehensible condition. If he could have had speech with Colston Drummond, even for the briefest space, there can be no doubt that the discarded lover's view of the situation would have gone a long way towards clearing Hubert's vision. Though much too intelligent a man of the world to sympathize in the slightest degree with the fanciful "isms" of his day, Drummond was constrained to accredit Morton with some sort of magnetic influence which had served to effect the subversion of Romaine's reason, so far as he personally was concerned. His view of

her case was correct, his diagnosis accurate so far as it went. Upon the recovery of his manliness and power of cool reasoning, he was inclined to scout the fancy that any serious consequences would result from Romaine's infatuation. He argued that such caprices must be transitory, and persuaded himself, that, without his interference, affairs must right themselves, and ultimately right themselves in his favor.

However, he smarted under the lash of Mrs. Effingham's dismissal; her action wounded him far more than did the compulsory return of his betrothal-ring. He acutely judged that Romaine, being under the supremacy of Morton, was not responsible for what she might do, whereas it must be otherwise with her mother. He felt convinced that were he to go to Mrs. Effingham and masterfully demand an explanation of her attitude towards him, he could easily win her back to his side. But she had dismissed him from her house—the fact burned and rankled inwardly. He was touched in his most vulnerable point—his high-strung pride; and consequently he found himself unable to confront the passive days of exile within sight of Belvoir. It was a foolish, ill-advised step, his going away just at this important juncture; and he came to a realizing sense of his mistake ere he had placed a hundred miles between himself and the object of his heart's desire. Pride is short-lived; and, when pride dies, obstinacy ceases to seem a virtue. The truth came home to Drummond ere he had gone far from home, and with results which we shall presently see.

Hubert Effingham never favored Morton with Romaine's confidences of that unlucky moment in the garden. Much as he cared for Morton, he would have bitten his tongue off before he would have betrayed his sister—before he would have placed one pebble of impediment in the path of Drummond's cause. But, though he steered a middle course with studious fealty—though he struggled hard to be impartial in his estimate of both men—insensibly his sympathy fluttered away to the absent suitor.

Meanwhile no barrier was raised against the intimate intercourse of Romaine and her medical adviser. While she was with him, she was in abundant health and spirits; when separated, she pined; consequently, he was permitted to be her constant companion. Unmolested, they walked and drove together in the lengthening days of crescent summer. Upon such blissful occasions he invariably addressed her by the name of Paula, and she readily, happily answered to the name. Though he studied her with lynx-like intensity, he never discovered the slightest tremor of surprise that he should not address her as others did. So far he was satisfied, and in so far he fancied himself to be justified in laying the flattering unction to his soul that he was indeed in communion with the reincarnated spirit of his wife. The point which baffled him, before the non-committal front of which he shrank chilled and discouraged, was the total oblivion of all past events which that spirit evinced.

Yet he was not wholly discouraged, since he never permitted his cult of the veiled idol to overshadow his system of persistent investigation. For the hundredth time, he would endeavor to recall to her mind some sweet episode of his by-gone courtship, or briefly happy wedded life, and for the hundredth time she would reply, with that gentle smile,

“How I wish I could remember a time that must have been so joyous! Ah, my dear Loyd, I fear this poor head of mine is like the Chaldean idols—more clay than gold!”

Certainly her defective recollection of the leading events in the life of Romaine Effingham, previous to her acute illness, lent color to the supposition that Paula Morton might be equally deficient in this regard, in that

both personalities were forced to act through the same disabled brain; that is, granting the doubt as to which spirit might be in residence at the time.

Naturally, the reasoning was not logical—not conclusive to a man of Morton's intelligence; and yet with it he was fain to be content.

Of one thing he was satisfied; Paula, reincarnated, could not have loved him more fondly than the beautiful being who had voluntarily abandoned every tie to bind herself to him. Sometimes he wondered, with the chill of death at his heart, how it was all to end; and she, seeming to divine the desperate query, as often as it presented itself, when he was with her, would exclaim,

"What matters it whether I recall the past or not, so long as we are happy in the present, so long as you have my love for the future and for all eternity?"

Paula might have said that in just such words; and the glamor of his fool's paradise encompassed him again. Thus the inexplicable situation, in the natural course of events, grew to a climax.

One afternoon they had been riding for miles through the park-like woodland of the neighborhood, their horses keeping leisurely pace through aisles white with the bloom of dogwood. For a while Morton had entertained his companion with reminiscences of that happy by-gone time which was a reality to him, a pleasing effort of the imagination to her. Her responsiveness was an encouragement to him; and he began at the beginning, closing with the untimely end.

There were tears—fears of genuine sympathy and sorrow—in her limpid eyes as he ceased speaking. So graphic had been his description of that last scene in the cemetery—that end-all to his hope and joy—that she seemed to see the lonely figure beside the open grave, to hear his sobs mingling with the sough of the rainy wind, and to feel the unutterable desolation of that grievous hour.

"Loyd," she said, after a brief pause, her tone suggestive of unshed tears, "you must take me to her grave some day."

"Whose grave?" he demanded sharply, her sympathy for the first time striking a discordant note in his soul.

"Her grave," she answered, wonderingly, "your wife's."

He slid from his saddle, allowing his horse to turn to the lush grass, and came to her side. He took her hand in both of his and looked up into her face with an intensity that startled her.

"That grave was *your* grave, Paula," he said. "Can you not understand?"

"It is hard to realize," she faltered.

"And you are *my* wife!"

She turned pale so suddenly that he would have been alarmed, had not the fugitive dye instantly returned deeper than before upon cheek and brow.

"Your wife!"

"My wife in the sight of God! Oh, have no doubt of it; for your indecision would drive me mad! Paula was my wife, and you are Paula!"

"Yes, but Paula in another form."

"Exactly! But still my wife!"

"Not in the sight of man."

"Then the sooner we are made one again, the better!" he went on impetuously. "See, you wear your own betrothal-ring. Can you, will you submit to the absurdity of a second marriage ceremony, for the sake of the blind world's opinion?"

"I can and will," she answered.

"Then let there be no delay!"

He reached up, and, bending low, she kissed him upon the lips; and she did it so frankly, trustingly, that henceforth he banished every doubt, every vestige of uncertainty to that vague realm whither much of his outraged common-sense had fled.

Late that night a wailing cry startled the quiet of the house—a cry low, but sufficient in carrying-power to rouse Mrs. Effingham from the depths of her first sleep. Hurrying, breathless with apprehension, through the dressing-room which separated her chamber from Romaine's, speechless was her amazement and alarm to find the girl standing before her mirror, the candelabra ablaze on either side, robed from head to foot in white, the splendid masses of her hair sweeping about her shoulders. Upon her exquisite neck and arms scintillated rivulets of diamonds, heir-looms of the Effingham family, which descended to each daughter of the house upon her eighteenth birthday; while in her hand, held at arm's length, glittered an object which had the sheen of blent gold and jewels—a tiny object that fitted softly into the snowy palm. Upon this object were her eyes riveted, with a sort of wild dismay in their inspection. She seemed entranced, and for a minute the watcher dared give no sign of her intrusion.

CHAPTER X.

"Wilt thou pluck my fair son from mine age,
And rob me of a happy mother's name?"

THE events which led up to the somewhat dramatic climax in Romaine's chamber at midnight would scarcely seem to warrant so pronounced a crisis. An agreeable evening had been passed in the music-room, Morton and Hubert smoking, Mrs. Effingham busied with some bit of fancy-work, while Romaine played the piano or sang, as her mood suggested. She was an ardent musician, possessed of a fine mezzo-soprano voice, which had been trained in the best schools. Her fancy was for the fantasticism of the more modern composers; and upon this occasion, being in the vein, she sang, with remarkable effect, the weird night-song of the slave in Goldmark's "Queen of Sheba," the dreamy Berceuse from "Lakme" and two or three of Meyer Helmund's idyllic creations. The vibrant tenderness and surpassing melody of her voice filled her hearers with wonder. Never had she sung with such depth of feeling; and they marvelled at it, regarding the performance as a revelation. Naturally, as the evening wore on, a reaction set in, a pallid exhaustion took the place of the heightened color of cheek and lip, and finally Romaine rose from the piano unnerved and hysterical. The party promptly broke up, and Mrs. Effingham led the way to her daughter's chamber.

By eleven o'clock the good lady had left Romaine, apparently calm and at peace with herself, in the hands of her maid, and had retired for the night.

The gown of India silk had been exchanged for a garment of soft white wool, the peculiar flowing pattern of which suggested the graceful robes of Watteau and Greuze, and in it the young mistress of Belvoir reclined at ease upon her couch. So lost was she in revery, that she took no heed of the maid, who, her preparations for the night completed, glided to the back of the couch and stood waiting. The Dresden clock's faint tick became audi-

ble, and presently the chime rang out. The oppressive silence broken, the maid spoke:

"Will Miss Romaine have her hair brushed now?"

Romaine turned with a start, casting one exquisitely moulded arm up to the back of the couch, so that she faced the speaker.

"I must have been asleep or in a trance!" she exclaimed in a dazed way.
"No, no, Eunice; I will braid my hair to-night. Go to bed. It is late. See, it is half-past eleven."

"But, miss, I—"

"Yes, I know you would work over me until you dropped from sheer fatigue," the young lady went on, with a smile; "but I shall not permit it—not to-night. I prefer to be left alone. Good-night."

Reluctantly the maid vanished, closing the door behind her.

The instant she disappeared, Romaine rose and stood in the faint glow of the single candle, her white robe lying in ample folds about her.

"At last I am alone!" She listened intently for some sound in the silent house. "Alone—with my thoughts of *him*! How he loves me; but," with a fluttering sigh, "how he loved that *other one*—that Paula! Am I she? He says I am; and who should know as well as he? Oh, it is all so strange, so mysterious, that—that I cannot tell. His great love assures me that I must have lived before. When I am with him, I am as sure as he; but, when he is not with me, I seem to doubt, to be groping somewhere, as it were blindfold, among familiar scenes. O Loyd, sustain me, be my guide, or I shall fall by the wayside, fainting, helpless!"

She crossed her chamber and stood before her mirror, gazing intently at her reflection. Presently she withdrew the golden pin from her hair and let its rich masses fall about her shoulders like a bronze-gold veil.

"His wife!" she murmured, smiling wanly at her image; "his wife *again* after some lapse of time! How long a time? Ah, does he detect some change in me which he is too loyal to notice? With time, come change and decay. How can I tell how changed I may be—in *his* sight?" She shuddered, and peered more keenly at the mirror. "If I *am* changed," she concluded, with a pretty assumption of desperate resolution, "it is my duty to repair the ravages of time. I will be dressed like any queen at her bridal. I will wear all my jewels, and let their lustre conceal defects from even his generous eyes. He loves me; but I must struggle to *hold* that love. My jewels! Where are my jewels? How shall I look in them?"

With feverish haste she opened the compartments of the toilet-table until her eager hands fell upon a casket of dull red leather, faded and bruised. Within, however, the velvet cushions were as fresh and white as though newly lined; there was no more hint that four generations had gazed upon their sheeny lustre than there was hint of age in the priceless gems that nestled, glittering like captured stars, amid their depths.

Romaine uttered a sigh of delight, and, with eager, trembling hands, hung the chained brilliants upon her neck and arms. Then she lighted the candelabra beside the mirror, and stood back, speechless before her own surpassing beauty.

"Would he could see me *now!*" she exclaimed naïvely, entranced, then bent forward to insert still other jewels in her ears.

At that moment an object set in gold and rimmed with diamonds caught her eye. She had not noticed it before, but now it riveted the inspection of her very soul.

She snatched it from the case with a low, wailing cry, akin to the

smothered utterance of one laboring in nightmare, and held it at arm's length, breathless, speechless.

Simply a medallion set in gems, the medallion of a man's face—*the face of Colston Drummond!*

And it was at this moment, supreme enough to thrill poor Romaine's reviving intellect, that Mrs. Effingham hastily entered the chamber.

The lateness of the hour, coupled with her daughter's incongruous toilet, startled the good lady into the passing fancy that some unexpected crisis had arrived—that Romaine had indeed taken leave of her senses. She uttered some stifled exclamation and stood spell-bound. As quick as thought the girl dropped the miniature into its case and turned to confront the intruder.

"Mother!" she exclaimed, her voice trembling with repressed emotion. "thank heaven, you have come! Otherwise I should have been forced to wake you, for I cannot sleep, I cannot wait another hour, another minute. I *must* speak now, this instant!"

She came to her mother and laid her jewelled arms about her neck, her very attitude eloquent of the yearning of her soul.

It was with the utmost effort that Mrs. Effingham commanded herself sufficiently to conceal the dire apprehension that assailed her.

"And so you shall speak, my darling," she answered soothingly, as one would humor a perverted fancy; "unburden your whole heart to me."

"Mother, I was to have been married this month."

"Yes, my dear child."

"How many days are we from the date proposed?"

The anxious pallor of the lady's face overspread her lips and she hesitated.

"What does it matter, dear?" she faltered.

"What does it matter!" echoed Romaine steadily; "it matters much—to me. Events have become confused in my mind since my illness; so you must tell me how soon I was to have been married. You *must* tell me, for I wish to know."

"The twentieth of May was the day appointed," was the reluctant reply.

"And it is now?"

"The fifth."

"More than a fortnight to wait! And delays are dangerous. Mother, I have seen my wedding-dress in the east room. Is everything prepared?"

"Everything, Romaine."

"Then why delay, and so court danger? Let my marriage take place at once, the sooner the better."

"Romaine!"

"Loyd has spoken to-day; he would second my petition were he here."

"Loyd!"

She recoiled out of the girl's embrace as she spoke, and stood staring at her in blank amazement.

"Loyd!" she added faintly; "it is *Loyd* you wish to marry?"

"Whom else?" answered Romaine, smiling calmly; "you would not doubt it, mother dear, if you knew *all*. Oh, I am not demented, as perhaps you think. I am myself again, thanks to the magnetism of his great love. Mother, if I thought that he were never to have the right in the sight of God and man to call me wife, I should pray for death—ay, court it as the sweetest boon. Thwart me in my love, and you kill me; grant my prayer, and you not only give me life, but heaven upon earth!"

• • •

It cannot be said that Mrs. Effingham was wholly unprepared for the turn affairs had taken. Setting aside Hubert's expressed suspicions, her woman's instinct had vaguely warned her how this inexplicable course of love had raised Morton upon its bosom, leaving Drummond high and dry, stranded upon the stale and unprofitable shore of Neglect. And yet, out of sheer loyalty to Drummond and his interests, she had refused to listen to that mysterious voice, stiller and smaller than the voice of conscience. She had waited to be convinced by some ulterior medium which, after all, she knew could but accord with her own unacknowledged convictions.

From her son next day she received but cold comfort, though it was gently offered, according to his wont.

"I told you so," he remarked. "For Colley's sake, I have done what I could, only to be met by dismal failure. I will never venture to risk so much again. We must accept the inevitable, dear mother, and make the best of a situation which, if inexplicable, is far from desperate. I can only say, God grant that Romaine's determined action may not prove to be some insane caprice!"

"Amen to that!" came the faltering reply.

The lady's first interview with Morton after the revelation was managed in more diplomatic fashion.

She met the young physician in the garden before breakfast on the following morning. She kissed him in silence, and held his hands while the unbidden tears welled within her haggard eyes.

"Romaine has spoken!" he exclaimed, interpreting the mute eloquence of her attitude.

She bowed her head in assent.

"And you—you have given your consent?" he asked tremulously.

"Did you not warn me that it might be fatal to thwart Romaine in any way?"

"That is not answering my question," he said with sudden sternness; "do you give your consent to our marriage?"

"Romaine's peace of mind is paramount to all other considerations," she answered; "her will is my law."

"But you are reluctant to give her to me."

"I know no reluctance where her wishes are concerned. I have closed my eyes to every other consideration save her happiness, Loyd; and with all my heart I give her to you—for her sake."

And with such modicum of consolation he was obliged to be content.

Considering the eminent social position of the persons concerned, it is small wonder that the report of Romaine's change of heart swept society like a whirlwind. The indignation that was expressed on the score of the young lady's so-called frailty was not occasioned by the fact that the fashionable world loved Morton less, but that it loved Drummond more. Had the latter gentleman stood by his guns, he would have been the hero of the hour and received a greater meed of sympathy than is usually vouchsafed the banished lover; but, as he had played the renegade when he should have formally opposed his rival, society shrugged its shoulders, and saw to it that Morton's prowess did not want praise and esteem. Thus ever does the myopic world deceive itself.

It was decided that the ceremony should be accomplished upon the twelfth day of the month, that it should be conducted with the strictest privacy, and that no invitations should be issued. Of course there would be "after-cards," and in due course there would be receptions upon the re-

turn of the pair from a sojourn in Europe. Such were the hasty arrangements, to which all concerned agreed.

The change from doubt to certainty operated most favorably upon Morton—the galling irritability of the past few weeks vanished; the natural buoyancy of his early youth returned; he seemed to find a zest in living, which was a surprise and delight to no one more than to himself.

Romaine, on the other hand, though to all appearance happy and content, endured nameless torture when left to herself—her nights were hideous epochs of harassing suspense and misgiving; the unattended hours of her days were rendered unbearable by some invisible incubus which, she was neither able to explain nor banish. Ever and anon she would seem to herself to be upon the verge of some explanation, some solution of the enigma with which she wasted herself in unavailing battle; but no sooner did she find herself approaching this most desirable consummation, than she fell into the toils of Morton's irresistible influence, and was content to find herself the victim of his soothing wiles. In a word, her meditations upon the subject simply resolved themselves into this formula: When I am with him, I love him beyond question; when I am *not* with him, my love is crossed by doubt.

As if by instinct Morton divined the threatening condition of her mind, and consequently left no stone unturned to hasten the preparations for his marriage. Circumstances forced him, in great measure, to relax his sedulous care and espionage. To all appearance he found his patient as hale, mentally and physically, as she had ever been; and, though he was by no means free of apprehension on her account, he did not scruple to absent himself as often as he found it necessary for him to make some adjustment of his affairs in view of an indefinite sojourn abroad. Then, too, he experienced the liveliest satisfaction in setting his somewhat neglected house in town in order, and in beautifying its every detail for the reception of his bride. The wilful, methodical nature of the man manifested itself in just such *minutiae* as the hanging of a drapery here, or the placing of an ornament there, that he might satisfy himself as to the exact appearance of the place when she should come home to it—it mattered not when. He trusted no one; he placed no confidence in judgment other than his own. It was a labor of love; and, like a labor of love, it had long since become a work of faith, as was meet—especially under the circumstances.

Several hours of each day Morton passed in the city, and perhaps nothing afforded such ample proof of his confidence in the establishment of affairs as the composure and assurance with which he returned each time to Belvoir. The truth was, he had made assurance double sure, and taken a bond of Fate—or so he was constrained to regard his successful course.

It was during one of these occasions of non-attendance, a day or two after the rumor of the engagement had spread its facile wing, that an imposing family-carriage, decorated as to its panels with the ensign armorial of the Drummonds, turned in at the gates of Belvoir, and entered upon the gradual ascent of the avenue with the cumbrous roll of stately equipages in general, and of the Drummond equipage in particular. Upon the hammer-cloth were seated an ancient coachman and footman, most punctilious of mien and attire; while within the coach, bolstered into an upright position among the cushions, sat a lady well into the decline of life and health, a spare, stern creature, with the face of an aged queen. It was a face from which the effulgence of haleyon days had died out, but despite the rigidity of its lines it was still a countenance replete with an inborn dignity. Letitia

Drummond had been a beauty in her day, and it was some consolation to her in her decline, to find something of her famed advantages revived in her only and beloved son.

This son was her idol, in her eyes a very paragon; her worship of him was the one vital interest of her invalid existence. Secluded from the world by reason of her malady, she drew vitality from her communion with him as the frail, unearthly orchid subsists upon the air which its hale neighbors reject.

It had been years since the widow Drummond had entered her carriage, and she had by no means dared exposure to the dampness of this May morning for a trifle. As the horses leisurely took their way along the avenue the lady glanced forth upon the luxurious verdure of lawn and budding trees, with a critical scrutiny not unmixed with malevolence.

Presently the glimpse of a girlish figure gathering lilacs in a by-path, riveted her attention. Quickly she touched a bell, and in the next instant the coach had stopped and the footman was at the open door.

"I see Miss Effingham," she remarked; "give me my cane and help me out. There! Now drive on a short distance, remain there ten minutes, then return for me here. You understand."

The command was given in a grudging tone, as if each word, each breath of the balmy air cost her a pang.

From her lilac-bower Romaine had watched the proceeding in wonder; but as the carriage departed, leaving the withered figure, wrapped in its finery of a by-gone date, standing alone in the sunshine, she came forward, her hands filled with snowy blossoms.

They met beside a rustic garden-seat, beneath hawthorns full of rosy bloom and the carolling of birds.

As Romaine paused, irresolute, the lady spoke:

"You recognize me?"

"You are Mrs. Drummond."

"I am Mrs. Drummond, Colston's mother."

She had drawn her weapon, and seemed figuratively to be examining the keenness of point and edge.

Romaine shuddered.

"Where is he?" demanded the lady.

"Where is—who?"

"Who!—who but my son? Whose absence in all this wide world should I give an instant's thought to but my son's? For whom else should I dare misery and perhaps death to inquire for but my son! Answer me! where is he?"

Poor Romaine had grown as pallid as the flowers that trembled and dropped one by one from her nerveless hands.

"Answer me!" repeated Mrs. Drummond; "I am his mother, and I will not be satisfied with any white-lipped silence. What have you done with my son? Where is he?"

"I—I do not know."

Most hearts would have been touched by the pitiful innocence of those words and look.

"You do not know. I will believe you so far; but why has he left his home—and me?"

"How can I tell?" faltered the girl.

"I can imagine you experience some difficulty," was the harsh reply, "but I mean to remove all obstacles from your path so that you *can* tell, and also give me a coherent account. He had entrusted his happiness to

your keeping ; he had divided his love for me with you. What account have you to give of your stewardship?"

The helpless attitude of the girl coupled with her wild-eyed silence, seemed to infuriate the lady.

"No wonder you do not dare to raise your voice to answer me," she cried shrilly; "faithless, false-hearted girl! You have wrecked his life! And when the news of your ill-assorted marriage reaches him, it will kill him, and I shall not survive his death! Jezebel!" she hissed, gripping Romaine's arm in her gloved claw, "do you comprehend that two lives, two God-given lives will be upon your soul when you have consummated this unholy deed? I would die for my son. I would even be branded with crime for the sake of his peace and happiness! I *love* him! And what has your vaunted love amounted to? Answer me, or I will smite that mutely-mocking mouth of yours! Have you not told him a thousand times, have you not assured him by word, by deed, by action that you loved him? Answer me!"

"Yes," came the gasping reply.

"Then why have you played him false?"

"Oh, I do not know, I—I cannot tell!"

She cast the delicate arm from her as though the contact were contamination.

"I hope to heaven you *are* insane, as it is whispered," she gasped, weak from excess of anger and feebleness; "madness would be your only salvation in *my* eyes. But I have my doubts, I have my doubts. I shall raise heaven and earth to find my son, I shall go in search of him myself if messengers fail, and when he is found I shall send him to you, and I only pray that the sight of him may strike you dead at his feet if he comes too late?"

The grinding of the returning carriage-wheels upon the gravel of the avenue interrupted her further utterance, and in silence she hobbled back to the footman, who obsequiously replaced her upon her cushions.

Left alone amidst the whispering leaves, the sunshine and the birds, Romaine slowly struggled back to semi-consciousness. She pressed her hands upon her throbbing temples, while dry sobs rent her from head to foot.

"O what have I done?" she sobbed, "and what am I doing?"

Like one stricken with sudden blindness she felt her way from tree to tree, leaning against their trunks every now and then for support. In this pitiful way she reached the terrace-steps, stumbled and fell prostrate in the garish light, like a stricken flower discarded by the reapers.

CHAPTER XI.

"The Devil tempts thee here
In likeness of a new untrimmed bride."

"Such a mad marriage never was before."

If Serena Effingham derived any comfort from the contemplation of Romaine's precipitate union with Morton, that comfort resided in the fact that having secured the constant attendance and companionship of the young physician, the girl would enjoy immunity from the mysterious crises that were likely to assail her whenever he was not at hand. There was no gainsaying the point that Romaine was perfectly herself while under

Morton's influence. No one could deny the potency of the spell he exerted ; consequently Mrs. Effingham was forced to accept the lesser of the evils, if so strong a term may be applied to her gentle estimate of the situation.

It was the good lady herself who discovered her daughter lying insensible at the foot of the terrace steps ; and as Romaine, upon the recovery of her consciousness, guarded the secret of her stormy interview with Mrs. Drummond even from her mother, who was in ignorance of the unwonted visit, Mrs. Effingham remained in an agony of suspense and anxiety until Morton returned from town. At sight of him the girl flung herself into his arms and clung to him hysterically, to the perplexity of all concerned.

When questioned regarding the cause of her illness, she returned answers of adroit incoherency, simply maintaining that her existence was a burden to her when separated from Morton ; that she was wholly wretched and unable to command herself when left to herself. Naturally such extraordinary assertions lent color to the suspicion that her mind was affected ; yet, when in the presence of her heart's desire, she appeared perfectly sane and as soundly reasonable as ever she had been. Her condition seemed a hopeless mystery to all save Morton who was persuaded beyond peradventure, that he detected the almost jealous reliance of his departed wife through the mask of her reincarnation.

From that time forth he no longer absented himself from Belvoir, and the expectant hours crowded themselves into days that all too rapidly took their departure.

The eve of Romaine's wedding-day proved to be one of those rare epochs of spring that are instinct with the genial presage of summer, one of those intense days which May has in her gift, when one involuntarily seeks the shady side of city streets, or wanders into the shadows of the woods to escape the garish splendor of the open fields. Such weather is always premature and ominous of impending inclemency ; but it is none the less exquisite while it lasts.

All day long the lovers had luxuriated in the balmy air, and the setting sun surprised them bending their reluctant steps homeward through Drummond copse. One by one the swift hours had registered their happiness, their constantly reiterated oaths of fealty and their expressions of confidence in the future. They had uttered nothing worthy of being chronicled, for they had talked simply as lovers talk, with an intent significant only to themselves. They had laid their plans for the future as the poets fancy the short-sighted birds scheme at their nest building. Morton had proposed that, the ceremony over, they should drive to his town-house and there, amidst its renovated glories, forget the world until such time as they cared to claim its diversions again. There was method in the plan since he entertained some vague fancy that his reclaimed wife would be more at her ease, more at home among scenes which had witnessed the happiest hours of her past. And Romaine's joyous aequiescence increased his fancy until it became positive conviction. He even went so far as to surmise that the soul of Paula would evince a keen delight and interest in the new beauties of the old abode.

So the sun had set and the full moon had reared her colossal lamp to light them home. Suddenly, as they emerged from the copse and found themselves upon the rustic path that ran between Belvoir and Drummond Lodge, Romaine laid her hand upon her lover's arm with a sharp gasp.

"I have left my book up yonder upon the rocks where we sat !" she exclaimed ; "oh, Loyd, how careless of me ! and you gave it me !"

Morton laughed light-heartedly.

"We will send one of the men for it the morning," he said; "there will be no pilfering lovers in that place to-night, I warrant you."

"But it will be ruined by the dews," she insisted; "we may forget to send for it to-morrow; besides, I do not wish to leave it there. I will go back and get it."

"You!" he cried, with a laugh; "if you *must* have the worthless thing, I will go for it."

"We will go together, Loyd."

"No," he objected, in the gently authoritative tone which had become habitual with him, "you are completely tired out and the climb would prove the one straw too many. But how can I leave you here?"

"What is there to fear? We are within gun-shot of home."

Morton hesitated an instant; then he said with some reluctance,

"Would you mind walking on alone? I will make haste, take a short cut through the copse and meet you upon the lawn."

"Very well! I will walk slowly."

For some reason, which it would be vain to attempt to account for, he stooped and kissed her where she stood in a mellow ray of the risen moon.

"Why are you so particular about that little book?" he asked tremulously.

"I have already told you, dear," she answered.

"Because I gave it you?"

"Yes; for that reason it is precious, invaluable in my eyes."

"My darling! God bless you for those sweet words! To hear them from your dear lips again I would go to the ends of the earth!"

It was simply lovers' parley, but for some reason each felt its vague significance which in some way seemed portentous. He kissed her again, and left her alone in the woodland path.

At one period of her life, that happy time when a trip to Drummond Lodge had been numbered among the chief joys of her innocent life, Romaine had been familiar with every wild flower that bloomed, with every bird that sang in the copse; but since her mysterious illness all that had passed and the place seemed strange to her. Small wonder then that, in the exaltation of parting with Loyd Morton and in the dubious moonbeams, she turned, not towards Belvoir, but in the direction of Drummond Lodge. The night was one of ideal loveliness and as she leisurely threaded her way between the shadows cast by the great tree-boles, she softly sang to herself and smiled as her quick ear caught the twitter of the nesting birds. Suddenly the sharp snap of a twig punctuated the chant and its invisible chorus, causing the girl to pause abruptly and peer before her into the semi-gloom.

Could it be that love had lent her lover the fleetness of Fortunio's lackey, so that he had accomplished his quest and returned to surprise her ere she had reached the verge of the wood? Impossible! And yet the figure of a man loomed before her in the narrow, moon-lit path! Her heart fluttered, then sank like a dead thing in her bosom, while the words of glad welcome expired upon her blanched lips:

For she had recognized the man, and, by some swift divination of association, knew that he had a right to be where he stood—within his own domain.

The effect of the unexpected encounter was scarcely less patent in the case of Colston Drummond. He uttered some inaudible exclamation of

surprise, halted, then advanced a step, staring at the apparition in awed silence.

"Romaine!" he murmured at last, as if fearful of breaking the spell and dissolving the vision by the mere sound of his voice; "Romaine, can it be you—here—at this hour? In heaven's name, where are you going?"

"Home," she faltered, her very utterance paralyzed by amazement and vague fear.

"Home!" he echoed more distinctly, emboldened by the vital voice of the phantom; "you are going in the wrong direction. You are but a few steps from the Lodge. My poor girl, why are you here and alone?"

He spoke with the infinite tenderness which was part and parcel of his manly nature; and, though he came close to her side, even taking her hand in his, she did not cringe. Somehow she felt soothed and calmed by his presence, notwithstanding that she trembled as the environing leaves trembled in the rising breeze, and did not speak for lack of self-command.

"Do not shiver so," he said gently; "it is neither cold here, nor have you any cause for alarm—with me. You have only lost your way. Come, I will see you safely home."

Then she roused from her passing stupor.

"Oh no, no, no!" she cried piteously; "I must go alone. I—he is waiting for me. He must not see you—with me. Only show me the way."

"He!" Drummond asked calmly; "you mean Doctor Morton?"

She bowed in silence, while an unfathomable expression flitted across his face, to be lost in a pitiful smile.

"Well," he said, still holding the hand that she weakly strove to wrest from him, "he can wait for a few short minutes."

"No, no, I must go at once," she wailed; "have mercy upon me; let go my hand."

"Think, Romaine!" he commanded softly; "he will have you for all life, while these few paltry moments with you are all that remain to me. Think of it, Romaine, and be generous."

She looked into his face and read the anguished pleading of his eyes.

"First of all," he continued, "tell me how you came here? May I venture to hope that in the eleventh hour you were coming to speak a word of comfort to my mother?"

"No, I had lost my way."

"You did not know that I returned to-day?" he inquired, hope struggling against hope in his eager tone.

"I had forgotten that you had been away."

"You had forgotten!" he cried sadly. "O Romaine, how you have blotted me from your very existence! I can conceive of your love for me having changed; but why have you so utterly forgotten and neglected me?"

She closed her eyes and replied in sobbing accent, "I—I cannot tell. I seem to have been dreaming, to be dreaming still."

"Would it *were* all a dream! My darling—there—there, do not start, it is the last time that I shall ever call you so—darling, I only pray the good God that you are happy."

She did not answer, and he went on as though he did not notice her silence.

"Only to-day, within the last two hours, have I learned that to-morrow will be your wedding-day. Is—is it so?"

"Yes."

"Can you fancy what that means to me? Oh, heaven is my judge, I do

not mean to reproach you. It is too late for that. I did not even think to see you again ; it is some inexplicable fate which has brought us together. Believe me, I am resigned to my lot ; but, since we have met, since God in His mercy has vouchsafed me this one ray of comfort, permit me to beg you, to beseech you ever to regard me as your loyal friend. O Romaine, my heart's dearest love, if ever the shadow of sorrow or trouble arises, command me, even unto my last breath, and I will do my utmost to dispel it. I wish you joy, from my soul, I wish you joy ; I have forgiven, and I shall try to forget. If you doubt me, try me ; test my fidelity to you even unto death. Now, Romaine, have you no word for me ? no little grain of comfort to leaven the bitterness of this last farewell upon earth ? Be merciful !"

With the steadiness of summer rain the tears had been coursing over the girl's pallid cheeks, and there were tears in her voice as she cried,

"O my God ! let me sleep and continue to dream, for, should I awake, I should go mad!"

He took her in his arms and pressed her to his breast for one brief moment, while his kisses mingled with the tears that rained upon her shining hair. "I understand, I understand," he murmured brokenly, gently putting her from him ; "God help us both ! Yonder is your way. Hark ! he is calling you ! I need not go with you. Dry your tears and greet him with a smile ; perhaps it is better so, for I am not worthy of you. Some day we shall know— Good-by, my darling. Go, go quickly ! He must never know that we have met. May God bless and keep you !"

He continued to speak until she had vanished among the clustering shadows, the weird call of the distant voice punctuating his broken utterances. When at last she had really gone, and he found himself actually alone, he fell upon his face in an agony of desolation, stifling his sobs in the depths of the lush grasses.

And it was a crest-fallen, pallid being who came forth from the dimness of the woods to relieve Morton's anxiety.

"In mercy's name, where have you been ?" he exclaimed, hastening to her as she emerged into the lambent ways of the moon, and eagerly clasping her hand in his.

"I lost my way," she faltered, with downcast eyes, vainly striving to conceal the tears that glistened upon her lashes.

"But you have been weeping !"

"I became confused and frightened," she explained. She was about to add, "it seemed so lonesome without you ;" but the words remained unuttered.

As they walked side by side across the dewy lawn, Morton was not so much impressed by the incoherency of the explanation of her present condition as by the subtle change which had come over her within those few minutes. What could have caused it, he was completely at a loss to surmise ; what it might portend, he could not conjecture ; but that some mysterious change had taken place in her, he was as certain as though she had said in so many words,

"You should have been far-sighted enough not to have left me alone for an instant until I am irrevocably yours !"

He suffered the torture of a lifetime in those few brief moments ; and the torment was all the more poignant that it was too vague to impart, even if he had dared so to do.

Long ere they reached the house, the silence became so oppressive that in sheer despair he was forced to break it,

"I found the book," he remarked with effort, displaying the dainty volume.

She did not offer to take it from him, as he expected, as he fondly hoped; she simply replied, with eyes intent upon the ground,

"I am sorry to have given you so much trouble."

As if by instinct he felt as if virtue had gone out of him. How, when, or why, he could not determine, but in that hour an occult warning came home to him—a presage that his empire over Romaine Effingham was no longer supreme.

Had he known, had he even suspected, that Romaine would weep herself to sleep that night with Colston Drummond's jewelled miniature upon her bosom, he would have pulled himself together, banished the spell that held him in thrall, and thus averted the catastrophe that the pregnant moments hastened to consummate.

CHAPTER XII.

"But shapes that come not at an earthly call
Will not depart when mortal voices bid."

THE augury of the preceding day's perfection proved correct—Romaine's nuptial morn came up, veiled in murky clouds that promised a period of dismal rain. The very face of nature, of late so bright and jocund, suffered an obscuration that left it gray and drear. By sun-rise the mists crept swiftly up the hill-sides, revealed the verdant landscape for a moment, and then, as their custom is, descended in a persistent, chilling downpour.

Morton and Hubert were the only members of the household to meet at the breakfast-table, which the butler had striven to render resplendent, in honor of the occasion, by masses of ghastly Freesia and Narcissi.

The conversation of the two men during the repast was desultory in the extreme. There were dark rings around Morton's eyes, which betrayed a sleepless night ; he was nervous and constrained in manner, while the wan pallor of his face contrasted sharply with the unrelieved blackness of his garments. It was with evident relief that the brothers-elect left the table and separated by tacit consent.

It had been agreed that the ceremony should be solemnized in the conservatory at noon, after which the wedded pair should at once be driven to Morton's house in the city. The preparations were of the simplest description, if the mere removal of the rustic seats from the conservatory could be considered such.

To be sure, as the appointed hour drew nigh, various wines were placed upon the sideboard in the dining-room, where a bridal-cake occupied the centre of the table, upon which lay bride-roses and lilies-of-the-valley in richly fragrant garlands. Servants in holiday attire went hither and thither with muffled step ; otherwise the house maintained the most sepulchral silence. No sound of approaching equipage disturbed the rainy day without ; even the birds restrained their plaintive twitter beneath the dripping leaves. It was as if some invisible dead lay in state during that ominous lull which precedes the arrival of the mourners.

Left to himself, Morton paced to and fro in the library. He grew calmer, but by degrees more pallid, as the hours wore to noon, until, when the clergyman was ushered into his presence, his stern composure impressed

the man of God as most extraordinary. It was only when the slowly chiming clocks proclaimed the appointed hour, that Morton evinced the least animation. He sprang from his chair, while a hectic glow flashed into his face, and motioned the clergyman to follow him. Scarcely had they entered the conservatory when Romaine appeared, leaning heavily upon her brother's arm, and similarly supported upon the other side by her mother. A very bride of death she looked, her splendid attire rather heightening than relieving her pallor. She wore no jewels, as she had once proposed to do; and she had no need for them, since, if ever loveliness needed not the foreign aid of ornament, but was, when unadorned, adorned the most, Romaine Effingham in her bridal hour proved an exemplar.

They guided her faltering steps forward and gave her into Morton's keeping. He received her with feverish eagerness, and she seemed to thrill beneath his touch as he murmured some word into her ear that summoned the phantom of an answering smile.

Thereupon ensued an ominous pause, broken only by the servants as they grouped themselves at a respectful distance, and by the pitiless patter of the rain upon the glazed roof overhead.

Then the solemn words were pronounced which made the twain one—pronounced to the last Amen, without let or hindrance, and Romaine Morton turned to her husband to receive his kiss. She seemed strong and relieved in spirit as she accepted the tearful embraces of her mother and brother, betraying the while her haste to escape from the thraldom of her nuptial robes, and to be gone to meet the new life upon the threshold of which she stood.

During the progress of her change of costume she seized her opportunity, when unheeded by her mother, to slip a note, addressed to Colston Drummond, into her maid's hand, with the whispered petition that it be delivered as soon as she had left the house. And the loyal little confederate was already upon her way to Drummond Lodge as the carriage containing the wedded pair dashed into the sodden country road that led citywards.

It is needless to state that that day had proved the heaviest of Colston Drummond's existence. It is true that he had brought himself to that pitch of resignation which closely resembles apathy, but he suffered none the less the dull misery that inevitably succeeds acute anguish.

Though he was in ignorance of the hour which should make the idol of his life another's, it was enough that his doom was destined to be sealed at some period of the fatal span between sunrise and sunset. In accordance with his wishes, he had been left in undisturbed solitude during the morning hours, and, as he took no heed of the flight of time, the servant who intruded to announce the messenger from Belvoir found him stretched upon a divan in his sanctum, where he had received Morton that night, long weeks before.

Promptly recognizing the maid, he sprang to his feet, breathlessly demanding the object of her visit.

"I am the bearer of a note from my mistress, sir," the girl replied.

"From Mrs. Effingham?"

"From Mrs. Morton, sir."

He wavered for an instant, but, quickly recovering himself, he groaned, "Then the marriage has taken place?"

"It has, sir."

"Then what can she want of me?" he muttered inaudibly, as he accepted the missive and broke the seal.

He read Romaine's letter to the close with no outward sign of emotion, beyond a trembling of the hands, which he was powerless to repress. Suddenly, however, he raised his eyes, and there was the fire of an invincible resolution in their depths as he demanded,

"Mrs. Morton has left Belvoir?"

"Yes, sir, more than an hour ago."

"Have you an idea where she has gone?"

"To Doctor Morton's house in the city."

"Thank you—stay; you will be faithful to your mistress and—and to me," he added gently, "and you will keep your errand a secret?"

"You may trust me, sir."

"I shall not forget you."

Once more alone, he hastened to a window and dashed aside the draperies, the better to secure the sickly light that filtered in.

"She has set my soul on fire!" he panted. "O Romaine, Romaine, it had been wiser to let me live out my allotted time and die in my enforced resignation!"

Then his eyes fled over the lines which Romaine had penned, and which ran as follows:

"My dream is dispelled. I have awakened to the reality. God help me! Was it His will that I should have met you in the eleventh hour? To what purpose? Why could I not have slept on, even unto the end? I have been roused too late. In one hour I shall be a wife; and, with God's help I will prove myself worthy the name. But—O my friend, why should I have fallen the prey of such an inscrutable fate? You have said that some day we shall know. Your words will comfort me and give me strength to bear my burden without repining. I shall try to sleep and dream again, for such is my only refuge. God be with you."

He crushed the sheet within his palms, while the panoplies about the apartment rang with his exultant cry :

"She loves me! Thank God, it is not too late for righteous interference so long as she remains a wife in name only! There are hours between this and night, and all I ask is minutes in which to accomplish her salvation! Come what may, I will go to her!"

Meanwhile, Morton and his bride had sped over the intervening distance and found themselves safely housed against the storm in his renovated mansion in the city. Blinds and draperies had been raised to admit such light as there was; rare exotics spent their fragrance upon the genial air; and a repast of exceeding daintiness had been spread for their refreshment. Everything had been done which a refined forethought could suggest—in a word, the cage had been exquisitely gilded, and was in all respects worthy of the bird.

Beneath the mystic spell of his presence, Romaine had recovered her composure, and appeared to all intents and purposes her happiest self. Like a pair of joyous children they wandered from room to room, admiring the new splendors; and thus, in due course, they entered the apartment where, enthroned above the mantel and garlanded with pale blush roses, hung the portrait of Paula. Morton led his wife to a point of vantage, and bid her look upward, riveting his eyes upon her face the while with a hungry longing.

Before the blonde loveliness of the Saxon girl, Romaine paled, while a shudder rent her from head to foot. She sighed heavily, and turned to Morton with a piteous gesture.

"My dear Loyd," she murmured sadly, "never again call me Paula."

He recoiled from her as though each innocent word had stung him to the quick.

"My God!" he cried, "if I thought—" when he checked himself before her look of abject terror, came to her, and took her in his arms. "My darling," he faltered, "if you only knew what agony the mere suspicion of your doubt causes me, you would have pity upon me!"

He spoke with such suppressed passion, with such wild anguish in his haggard eyes, that her alarm faded to helpless amazement.

"I have expressed no doubt," she murmured; "what can you mean?"

"Oh, I do not know," he moaned. "Perhaps I am not quite myself; all the happiness of this day has unnerved me. But—but you bid me never to call you Paula again; what do you mean?"

"Why, simply that I am so inferior to her in loveliness," she answered with a flurried smile.

"Did I ask, did I expect, you to look like her?" he demanded fiercely. "Can you not understand that the flesh is dust, and to dust returns; but the soul is immortal? Paula's body is dust, but her immortal soul lives—lives, not in the realms of bliss to which it fled, released, but—where does it live to-day, at this very instant? I want to hear *you* tell me!"

He caught her delicate shoulders between his strong white hands and glared like some ravenous animal into her startled face.

"Answer me!" he commanded.

"O Loyd," she wailed, "how wildly you speak! How can I tell where her soul may be, since I can see no reason why it should not be in heaven!"

"If it *is* in heaven," he cried, thrusting her violently from him, "then am I in hell!"

With a stifled cry, poor Romaine staggered to a chair and sank upon it, overcome by the conviction that she had allied herself to a madman.

And in the ominous pause that ensued, a light rap sounded upon the closed door.

With a muttered ejaculation Morton pulled himself together and went to inquire into the untimely intrusion. Upon opening the door, he found his man upon the threshold, stammering some words of apology, which were summarily cut short.

"What do you want?" Morton demanded sternly.

"There is a lady in the office, sir."

"Where are your wits, that you have forgotten your orders? I am not at home to patients."

"But she has called repeatedly, sir."

"Send her to Doctor Chalmers, my colleague."

"She declares that she will not leave without seeing you. Here is her card."

The sight of that graven name seemed for an instant to petrify the beholder, and several seconds elapsed ere he was able to command himself sufficiently to speak.

Going to his shrinking wife, he raised her hand and pressed it to his lips in a way that was infinitely pathetic.

"I must leave you for a moment, to attend to an urgent case," he whispered; "and while I am gone, I beseech you to pardon a love which transcends all bounds. Some day you will understand all I have suffered. Be lenient with me, for I am an object for pity!"

In the dimness of his office, which had undergone no renovation and no decoration, he found himself confronted by the tall and slender figure of

a woman whom he knew full well. The veil had been raised from before the appealing beauty of the face which bore but slight traces of alteration since last he looked upon Margaret Revaleon !

His greeting was of so cordial a nature as to preclude all attempt on the part of his visitor to apologize for her intrusion.

" I am more than glad to see you, Mrs. Revaleon," he exclaimed, excitedly ; " your visit is most opportune. For the past week you have been omnipresent in my thoughts. Who shall say that I am not developing something of your own peculiar clairvoyance ? "

" I trust not," she said, regarding the speaker with apparent uneasiness. But he continued, with precipitate heedlessness,

" And how do you find yourself since last we met ? "

" My condition remains unchanged," replied the woman. " Indeed, I am satisfied that I have developed into what is popularly known as a spiritualistic medium. But I am wretched at the thought of being the unwilling possessor of this so-called odylic power; and I have come to you again to beseech you to treat me for a malady which I am convinced you can cure if you will."

Yielding to his adroit guidance, Margaret Ravaleon found herself once more seated in the luxurious patient's chair, while the young doctor seated himself before her with his back to the light.

Thus advantageously placed, he replied with a smile,

" Indeed, my dear madam, you overestimate my ability. I do not profess electro-biology. In order to do so, I should be obliged to enter upon an exhaustive course of reading of Reichenbach and his disciples. In point of fact, I have no sympathy with the believers in mesmerism and its concomitant fancies."

" No ? " she answered dreamily, that singular absence of inspection dulling her tawny eyes. " Do you know, doctor, that I am impressed to tell you that you are possessed of the mesmeric power to an extraordinary degree ? "

He winced consciously, but rejoined soothingly, doing his utmost to increase the stupor which was fast gaining command of his visitor,

" It may be as you say ; it is certainly a power second only to your own. What else have you to impart ? Anything that you might say, I should regard as oracular."

He thrilled from head to foot with a sense akin to sickening faintness, as he saw her eye-lids slowly droop while she extended her slim, white hands to him.

" Give me your hands," she murmured ; " oh, dear, dear, dear ! Stand back ; do not crowd so ! How many there are here ! —Ah ! "

The final word was simply an exhalation. She slumbered profoundly, breathing stertorously at first, but swiftly relapsing into perfect calm. The trance had begun. The portals of eternity seemed to be widening. The solemnity of the moment was supreme.

Morton's features became rigid as he watched ; his haggard eyes started from their sockets and the drops of an icy sweat pearlyed upon his brow. He had longed for this moment, and yet, now that it was his, he would have given his immortal soul to have been able to play the coward and escape the consequences.

In fact he did withdraw his hands from the slight grasp, but in the next moment he was held spell-bound, for Margaret Revaleon was speaking in that weirdly vaticinal tone.

" Poor Romaine ! Where is she ? "

"Who speaks? Who are you?" gasped Morton, once more grasping the outstretched hands.

"Her father. You should know me. I am Sidney—Sidney!"

"Sidney Effingham!"

"Yes, and I am called back to earth in spite of myself. There is trouble here among those I dearly love, and I am pained, disturbed in my happiness."

"Your widow and son are well," murmured Morton, profoundly awed by the impressive tone of the presence.

"Yes, yes; but Romaine! my daughter, where is she? She is no longer with her mother."

"Of course she is not!" exclaimed Morton; "is she not with *you* in heaven?"

The violence of the query appeared to disturb the medium; her eyelids fluttered and her breathing became labored, as though the conditions of the trance had been deranged. Presently, however, the transient agitation subsided and a name escaped her lips.

"Loyd!"

"Who speaks?" whispered Morton, vaguely conscious of a change of personality.

"How can you ask? Can you not guess?"

"No!" he cried wildly; "O God! I do not dare to guess, even to think! In heaven's name, do not tell me who you may be! and—and yet I *must* know! I am resolved to dare death itself to be satisfied! Who is it that speaks?"

"Paula, your wife—and I am waiting!"

The listening air seemed to cringe before the maddened shriek that filled the house.

Morton struggled to his feet and for a moment hovered above the quiescent figure beneath him with hands outstretched and hooked like the talons of a bird of prey; then with a groan he sank back into his chair; his arms fell like plummets at his sides and his head dropped forward upon his breast.

Meanwhile, in the luxurious chamber over which presided the radiant portrait of the dead, garlanded in roses, the unhappy bride paced to and fro, now wringing her delicate hands, and again dashing the terrified tears from her eyes. Each moment but served to increase her helpless alarm; she knew her husband's return to be immediate, at least inevitable, and yet she could not support the thought of his advent. In a word, the last shackle which bound her soul in mystic spell had fallen away, and she was herself again. It had required weeks to right the disordered brain and give it the strength requisite to battle with the mesmeric power of its master; but at last, late as it was, her mind had fully regained its normal functions.

In the midst of her pitiful quandary Romaine was startled by an impetuous step outside the closed door. She recoiled to the furthest corner of the room, and stood bracing her fainting body against the wall.

Contrary to her expectation it was Colston Drummond who flung wide the door and stood before her.

The revulsion of feeling well-nigh overpowered her, yet in some way she was able to demand, in answer to his passionate utterance of her name,

"Why are *you* here?"

"To protect you, Romaine."

"You forget that I can claim a husband's protection," she retorted valiantly.

"It is from him that I seek to protect you," Drummond exclaimed; "you should not have written to me as you did, should not have laid bare your tortured heart and revealed the secret which I have had every reason to suspect, which my great love for you divined long, long ago, if you did not wish me to fly to your rescue!"

She held up beseeching hands, as though she would ward off that which she would welcome, and cried piteously,

"Too late! It is too late!"

Whatever he might have said remained unuttered, since at the moment that frenzied cry reached their ears, freezing their blood with its baleful import.

"Merciful heaven!" gasped Romaine; "it is Loyd's voice! Something dreadful has occurred! Oh, prove yourself my protector, and come with me! Come, quick, quick!"

In the excitement of the moment, the brooding twilight, and their unfamiliarity with the house they lost much precious time. Indeed they were only guided at last to the grim little office by the sudden opening of a door through which the figure of a woman escaped and passed them in swift flight.

And then they entered in awed silence, to find the bridegroom sitting in the gloaming of his nuptial-day with pendent arms and sunken head, lost—

"In that blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened!"

THE END.

A DAUGHTER OF S. DOMINIC.

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A DAUGHTER OF S. DOMINIC.

IF she had been condemned to have her life written, and been given the choice of a name under which to appear before the world, this would probably have been the one she would have taken. But who could have persuaded the humble child of the grand S. Dominic that such a fate was in store for her, or induced her humility to accept it? Well, it matters little to her now whether men speak of her or for her, she is alike beyond the reach of their hollow praise and their jealous criticism. But to us it matters much. The teaching of such a life as Amélie Lautard's is too precious to be lost; it is a lesson to be sought out and hearkened to, for it is full of beauty, and light, and encouragement to those whom she has left behind.

Amélie was born at Marseilles on the 12th of April, 1807. Her father was a medical man, eminent in his

profession, an honorable man, and a good Christian. She lost her mother at the age of seventeen. Early in life she met with an accident which injured her spine so seriously as to render her by degrees quite humpbacked, the progress of the deformity was slow and very gradual, but even when it had grown to its worst it never looked grotesque or repulsive, nor did it, strange to say, take away from the singular dignity of her appearance or from the grace of her movements. In person she was tall and dark, not handsome, though her features had so much charm and expression that most people considered her so. Her intelligence was of a very high order, and pre-eminently endowed with that delightful and untranslatable gift called *esprit*. From her earliest childhood she began to develop an angelic spirit of piety and a sensitiveness to the sufferings of

others that is generally the outgrowth of maturer years. The sufferings of the poor claimed her pity especially, but not exclusively. The range of her sympathies was wide enough to embrace every kind and degree of sorrow that came within her knowledge. This characteristic of her charity, as rare as it is attractive, may be considered as the keynote of her life, and explains, humanly speaking, the extraordinary influence she exercised over all classes indiscriminately.

After her mother's death Amélie became the chief delight and interest of her father, and she repaid his tenderness by the most absolute devotion. Offers of marriage were not wanting for the accomplished and *spirituelle* young lady, but Amélie turned a deaf ear to them all; filial duty as much as filial love had wedded her to her father, and she declared her intention never to separate from him, or let any other love and duty come between those she had vowed unreservedly to him. It was probably at this period of her life that she bound herself exclusively to the service of God by a vow of perpetual virginity.

During many years Dr. Lautard's health was such as to require constant and unremitting care. Amélie nursed him with the tenderest affection, never allowing her devotions or her work amongst the poor to interfere with her first duty to him. He expired in her arms, blessing her and declaring that she had been the model of filial piety, the joy and solace of his widowhood. Amélie generously made the sacrifice of this one great affection to God, she drank the chalice with a broken heart, but with an unmurmuring spirit, and entered bravely on the new life that was before her. Hers was to be the mission of an apostle, and she must go forth to it unshackled by even the

holiest and purest of natural ties. She had long been a member of the Third Order of S. Dominic, to whom from her childhood she had had a great devotion. To her previous vow of virginity she now added a vow of poverty, which, in the midst of abundance, she observed rigorously to the end of her life. Dr. Lautard, knowing her propensities, and suspecting rightly that, if her fortune were left completely in her own power, she would despoil herself of everything and leave herself without the means of subsistence, tied it up in annuities which could not be alienated. But while binding herself henceforth to the practice of the most rigid austerities, Amélie did not break off from her accustomed intercourse with her friends. She continued to receive them as hitherto in her father's house. Dr. Lautard used to say that hospitality was a virtue which it behooved Christians living in the world to exercise towards each other, and he imbued Amélie with the same idea. Mindful of his precepts and example, she went on inviting her friends, and enjoyed having them with her, and surrounding them with attentions and seeing them well and hospitably served; at table she endeavored to disguise her own abstinence under a semblance of eating, or would sometimes apologize on the plea of her health, which had always been extremely delicate, for not setting them a good example.

Some rigid persons, unable to reconcile this frank and genial sociability with the crucifying life of penance and prayer and unremitting service of the poor and the sick which Amélie led, ventured to remonstrate with her on the subject. She replied with unruffled humility that it was a pleasure to her to continue to cultivate the friendships contracted for her and bequeathed to her by her

father, and that she felt satisfied there was nothing wrong in her doing so, and that it did neither her nor them any harm; on the contrary, hospitality was often a means to her of doing good; a worldly man or woman who would fly from her if she approached them with a sermon, accepted an invitation to dinner without fear or *arrière-pensée*, thus enabling her to bring them under desirable influences in a way that awoke no suspicion and roused no antagonism, and often led to the most salutary results; a friendly dinner was, moreover, not unfrequently an opportunity of bringing people together and reconciling those who were at variance; in fact, Amélie pleaded so convincingly the cause of Christian hospitality as it was practised in the Rue Grignan, that the critics withdrew thoroughly converted and rather ashamed of their censoriousness. This thirst for doing good was, moreover, so unobtrusive and so free from anything like an assumption of superiority, that it was impossible to resent it; the tact and simplicity that accompanied all her efforts to benefit others prevented their ever being looked upon as indiscreet or meddling. She had a way of rousing your sympathies in a charitable scheme, or your indignation against some act of injustice or cruelty, and drawing you into assisting in the one or redressing the other without your suspecting that she had laid a trap for you; never preaching, never dictating, she had that rare grace, whose absence so often foils the most praiseworthy intentions, of doing good without being disagreeable. Her conversation was so sympathetic, and, owing to her mind being so abundantly stored by reading under her father's direction, could be, when the opportunity occurred, so brilliant, that the most dis-

tinguished men delighted in it, and flocked to the Rue Grignan, counting it a privilege to be invited to its unpretending hospitalities. Amongst the many illustrious men who admired Amélie's *esprit* and virtues and who courted her co-operation in their apostolic labors, one of the most prominent was the Père Lacordaire. The history of their first work in common deserves special record, not only because of its being associated with "the cowled orator of France," but because it is peculiarly identified with the history of Provence, that land so dear to us all as the birth-place and cradle of the devotion to S. Joseph. "Beautiful Provence! It rose up in the west from your delightful land like the cloud of delicate almond blossoms that seems to float and shine between heaven and earth over your fields in spring. It rose from a confraternity in the white city of Avignon, and was cradled by the swift Rhone, that river of martyr-memories, that runs by Lyons, Orange, Vienne, and Arles, and flows into the same sea that laves the shores of Palestine. The land which the contemplative Magdalen had consecrated by her hermit life, and where the songs of Martha's school of virgins had been heard praising God, and where Lazarus had worn a mitre instead of a grave-cloth, it was there that he who was so marvelously Mary and Martha combined first received the glory of his devotion." We all know the passage by heart, but we quote it not so much for its sweetness as because it so appropriately introduces the story of the work in question, viz., the restoration of the pilgrimage of Ste. Baume, a pilgrimage once so celebrated throughout Christendom, but of late years fallen into neglect and almost total oblivion. Tradition tells us the story of its origin, its growth, its glories, and

its decay. Its origin dates from a little bark that eighteen centuries ago came floating down the sunny waters of the Nile and rode into the blue Mediterranean, freighted with a legacy from Palestine to France, bearing in its frail embrace none other than the family who had their dwelling on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, and whose names have come down to us with the halo of that simple and unrivalled title, "Friends of Jesus of Nazareth." Villagers and the simple folk of the place welcomed the exiles more kindly, let us hope, than Bethlehem had welcomed the Virgin Mother and reputed father of their Friend some five-and-thirty years before; at any rate, Lazarus and his sisters remained in Provence. The people gathered round the dead man whom Jesus had wept over and raised to life, and hearkened to his teaching; he planted the cross upon their soil, and sowed the seeds of the Gospel in their hearts, and in return they thanked him as the Jews had thanked his Master, by putting him to death. Lazarus opened the first page of the martyrology of France. Martha on her side withdrew to Avignon, where, on the ruins of a pagan temple situated on the Rocher des Doms, she built a Christian church, and dwelt there in the midst of a school of virgins, teaching the Gospel. She died at an advanced age, venerated as a saint, and renowned as much for her sublime gift of eloquence and her bountiful hospitality as for the austere sanctity of her life. We are not told how far, if at all, Magdalen shared the apostleship of her brother in Marseilles; the only trace of her that remains in that city is an altar in the vaults of the Abbey of S. Victor. These vaults are like catacombs, and the most ancient monument of Christian faith that Marseilles possess-

es. The legend says that Magdalen, immediately on landing on the shores of Provence, took up her abode upon the rocky heights of Ste. Baume and lived there for thirty years, her life divided between agony and ecstasy, between tears that had never ceased to flow since that day when at Simon's house she broke the alabaster vase over the feet of Jesus, and heard from his lips those words that have been the strength and the hope of sinners ever since: much had been forgiven her because she had loved much, and kept long vigils that were but a continuation of her faithful watch under the cross and at the door of the sepulchre. It seems strange, when we think of it, that she should have left the country where Jesus had lived and died, the home at Magdala that he had hallowed so often by his presence, and whose friendly hospitality had often been a rest and a comfort to him in his weary journeys round Jerusalem; that she should, above all, have torn herself from the companionship, or at least the neighborhood, of his Mother and the disciple whom he loved; for surely the one remaining solace of her purified passionate heart must have been to speak of her brother's Friend and her own dear Saviour with those who had known and loved him best, to revisit the places he had frequented, the site of his miracles and his sufferings, and that hill of solemn and stupendous memories where she and they had stood together in a common agony of woe, hushing their breaths to catch the last throb of his sacred heart. But perhaps this voluntary exile from those beloved associations was the last sacrifice, the crowning act of renunciation, that Jesus asked of her before he bade her farewell? Perhaps he expressed a wish that she and Lazarus should be in a humble way to the West

what Mary and S. John were to be to the East, and that they should forsake the land and the friends of their youth and go forth bearing the good news of his Gospel to France? He had raised her once to the rank of an apostle that morning after the resurrection, when he gave her a message to the disciples and bade her go and tell them and Peter that he was risen, and before ascending to his Father he may have told her once more to go and be the harbinger of his resurrection to disciples who knew him not and were yet dwelling in darkness. We shall one day know, please God, what her motive was, but meantime we may reverently conjecture that there was some such understanding between Our Lord and Magdalen which induced her to leave the country that was so full of the fragrance of his divine humanity, and where his Immaculate Mother still lingered in childless desolation. Magdalen came to Provence, and withdrew to a wild and barren spot, upon a mountain called, in memory no doubt of her first interview with Jesus, Ste. Baume; it rises above a valley that runs towards the Alps from the busy city of Marseilles. Here she dwelt in solitude, communing only with her Saviour, and shut away from cruel men who had crucified him. Many and beautiful are the legends grouped by the simple piety of the inhabitants around the lonely watcher of Ste. Baume; they tell you still in reverent and awestricken tones how seven times a day the saint was rapt into ecstasy, and carried from her cave in the mountain side to the summit of the mountain, and held there suspended between heaven and earth by angels, but seeing more of heaven than of earth, and hearing the music of the angelic choirs. The peasants show you, even in these unmystical days of

ours, the precise spot of an abru-
sally of the mountain where the an-
gels used to come every day at their
appointed hours to commune with
the penitent and lift her off the earth.
For thirty years she lived here in
penance and expectation, then the
term of her exile closed, the day
came when she was to be set free
from the bondage of the flesh, and
admitted once and for ever into the
presence of her risen Lord. Perhaps
Jesus himself whispered the glad tid-
ings to her in prayer; or perhaps it
was only the angels who were
charged with the message; but any-
how, tradition tells us—and who
dreams of doubting it?—that Mag-
dalene knew by divine inspiration
when the hour of her death was at
hand, and that she was filled with a
great longing to receive the body
and blood of her Redeemer before
entering his presence as her Judge.
S. Maximin, who had been the com-
panion of Lazarus and shared his la-
bor and his pilgrimage, dwelt in the
narrow plain which forms the base
of the three adjoining mountains, Ste.
Baume, St. Aurelian, and Ste. Victoire
—Ste. Victoire under whose shadow
Marius fought and defeated the Teu-
tons and the Cimbrians. The dying
penitent was unable to traverse her-
self the distance that separated her
own wild solitude from the hermitage
of S. Maximin, so the kindly angels
came and performed a last office of
love for the friend of their King, and
bore her across the hills and the
floods and the valleys to the oratory
of the saint: he too had been warned,
and was ready waiting for her. He
heard her confession, pronounced
again the words of pardon that had
been spoken first to her contrite soul
by Jesus himself, and gave her the holy
communion. Then she died, and S.
Maximin laid her in an alabaster
tomb that stood ready prepared for

her in his oratory. The piety of the faithful surrounded the tomb with enthusiastic reverence and devotion ; pilgrims flocked from all parts of the world to venerate the remains of the queen of penitents, and to visit the grotto where she had lived and the oratory where she died. Cassian, the monk, who was himself a native of Marseilles, after graduating in the school of the Egyptian anchorites, returned to his native city, and raised the Abbey of S. Victor over the crypt where Lazarus slept. Ste. Baume and St. Maximin soon drew him with irresistible attraction ; he founded two noble monasteries there, and he and his monks kept vigilant guard for a thousand years, from the IVth to the XIIIth century, over the ground where Magdalen had wept, and over the tomb where she rested. At the beginning of the VIIIth century, the Saracens invaded the fair land of Provence, and for nearly three hundred years it was a prey to their devastating fury. During this long period of invasion, the Cassianites, terrified lest the precious remains of Magdalen should be discovered by the enemy and desecrated, thought best to remove them from the place where they were known to be to one of greater secrecy and safety. They took the body, therefore, out of its famous alabaster tomb and laid it in the tomb of S. Sidonius, having previously translated elsewhere the relics of the holy bishop. With a view to future verification, the monks placed on the coffin an inscription testifying to the two translations, and narrating the manner of their accomplishment and the circumstances which led to it. The entrance to the crypt itself was then walled up with plaster, and overlaid further with a quantity of rubbish. But six centuries were to roll over the arid heights of St. Maximin before the entrance was to

be broken open and the written testimony of the Cassianites invoked. When the wars of the Saracens were over, and men began to breathe in peace, and turn their thoughts once more to the worship of God and the veneration of his saints, the fact of the translation of the body of Magdalen from its original resting-place to the sarcophagus of S. Sidonius had faded from their recollection ; it was only repeated in a vague sort of way that the illustrious penitent had been removed to a place of safety, which was supposed to be at a distance ; some local coincidences pointed to the Abbey of Vezelay as the spot which had been privileged to receive and shelter her. By degrees this belief took root in the public mind, and the stream of pilgrims began to flow once more and with renewed enthusiasm towards the venerable old Abbey of Burgundy ; crusaders met there to invoke before starting for the defence of the Holy Sepulchre the protection of her whom the evangelists had handed down to us as the heroine of the Sepulchre ; kings and prelates, warriors and poets, sinners and saints, flocked to the supposed tomb of Magdalen, "till," in the words of a chronicler of the time, "it seemed as if all France were running to Vezelay." God is slow to tell his secrets. It was not until the close of the XIIIth century that the illusion, which had evoked so much piety and so many manifestations of faith from Christendom, was dispelled, and the truth revealed. This is how it happened. We will translate from the Père Lacordaire, whose *Sainte Marie Madeleine* has supplied us almost exclusively with the foregoing details :

"S. Louis had a nephew born of his brother, Charles of Anjou, King of Sicily, and Count of Provence. This nephew, who was likewise call-

ed Charles, and who on the death of his father became king of Sicily and the county of Provence, under the title of Charles II., had for S. Magdalén a tenderness which he inherited from his race, and which, though common to all the chivalry of France, attained in him the highest degree of ardor and sincerity. While he was still Prince of Salerno, God inspired him with a great desire to solve the mystery which for six centuries had hung over the grave of her whom he loved for the sake of Jesus Christ. He set out therefore to St. Maximin without any display, and accompanied only by a few gentlemen of his suite, and having interrogated the monks and the elders of the place, he caused the trenches of the old basilica of Cassian to be opened. On the 9th of December, 1279, after many efforts which up to that time had been fruitless, he stript himself of his chlamyde, took a pickaxe, and began to dig vigorously into the ground with the rest of the workmen. Presently they struck upon a tombstone. It was that of S. Sidonius, to the right of the crypt. The prince ordered the slab to be raised, and it was no sooner done than the perfume which exhaled from it announced to the beholders that the grace of God was nigh. He bent down for a moment, then caused the sepulchre to be closed, sealed it with his seal, and at once convoked the bishops of Provence to assist at the public recognition of the relics. Nine days later, on the 18th of December, in the presence of the archbishops of Arles and of Aix, and of many other prelates and gentlemen, the prince broke the seals which he had prefixed to the sarcophagus. The sarcophagus was opened, and the hand of the prince, in removing the dust which covered the bones, encountered something which, as soon as he touched

it, broke with age in his fingers. It was a piece of cork from which fell a leaf of parchment covered with writing that was still legible. It bore what follows: 'L'an de la Nativité du Seigneur 710, le sixième jour du mois de Décembre, sous le règne d'Eudes, très pieux Roi des français, au temps des ravages de la perfide nation des Sarrasins, le corps de la très chère et venerable Marie Madeleine a été très secrètement, et pendant la nuit transféré de son sépulchre d'albâtre dans celui-ci, qui est de marbre et d'où l'on a retiré le corps de Sidoine, afin qu'il y soit plus caché et à l'abri de la dite perfide nation.'* A deed setting forth this inscription and the manner of its discovery was drawn up by the prince, the archbishops, and bishops present, and Charles in great joy, after placing his seals again upon the tomb, summoned for the fifth of May of the following year an assembly of prelates, counts, barons, knights, and magistrates of Provence and the neighboring counties to assist at the solemn translation of the relics which he had been instrumental in raising from the obscurity of a long series of ages."

The news of the event was hailed with a shout of joy by all Christendom; kings and prelates vied with each other in doing honor to the new-found treasure; gold and precious stones poured in in quantities to adorn the shrine which was destined to replace the alabaster tomb of S. Maximin. "When the appointed day ar-

* "In the year of the Nativity of our Lord 710, the sixth day of the month of December, under the reign of Eudes, most pious King of the French, during the ravages of the perfidious Saracen nation, the body of the most dear and venerable Marie Madeleine was secretly and by night transferred from its alabaster sepulchre into the present one, which is of marble, and whence the body of Sidonius has been withdrawn, in order that the other may be better concealed and be beyond the reach of the above-named perfidious nation."

rived," continues the Père Lacordaire, "the Prince of Salerno, in the presence of a vast and illustrious assembly, opened for the third time the monument which he had sealed, and of which the seals were certified to be intact. The skull of the saint was whole except for the lower jaw-bone, which was wanting;* the tongue subsisted, dried up, but adhering to the palate; the limbs presented only bones stripped of the flesh; but a sweet perfume exhaled from the remains that were now restored to light and to the piety of souls. . . . The fact had already been made known of a sign altogether divine having been seen upon the forehead of Magdalen. This was a particle of soft, transparent flesh on the left temple, to the right, consequently, of the spectator; all those who beheld it, inspired at the same moment by a unanimous act of faith, cried out that it was there, on that very spot, that Jesus must have touched Magdalen when he said to her after the resurrection, *Noli me tangere!* There was no proof of the fact, but what else could they think who beheld on that brow so palpable a trace of life which had triumphantly resisted thirteen centuries of the grave? Chance has no meaning for the Christian; and when he beholds Nature superseded in her laws, he ascends instinctively to the Supreme Cause—the Cause that never acts without a motive, and whose motives reveal themselves to hearts that do not reject the light.

. . . Five centuries after this first translation, the *noli me tangere*, as that instinct of faith had irrevocably named it, subsisted still in the same place and with the same characters;

* Seven years later, when the head was taken to Rome by Charles, Boniface VIII. sent to S. John of Lateran for a relic which had long been venerated there as the maxillary bone of Magdalen; on adjusting it to the broken part, it fitted in so exactly as to leave no doubt as to where it had originally been taken from.

the fact was authenticated by a deputation of the Cour des Comptes of Aix. It was not until the year 1780, on the eve of an epoch that was to spare no memory and no relic, that the miraculous particle detached itself from the skull; and even then the medical men who were called in by the highest authority in the county certified that the *noli me tangere* had adhered to the forehead by the force of a vital principle which had survived there."

The piety of Charles of Anjou raised a stately temple to the penitent of Bethany on the site of the oratory of S. Maximin. Boniface VIII., who had beheld with his own eyes the miraculous presence of the *noli me tangere*, endowed the basilica munificently, and authorized the king to transfer the custody of the relics from the Order of Cassianites, who had formerly held it, to that of the Sons of S. Dominic, since become renowned through the world under the name of *Frères prêcheurs*. A great number of popes visited the shrine, and every king of France held it a duty and a privilege to come to S. Maximin and Ste. Baume, and invoke the aid and protection of the saint; up to Louis XIV., hardly a sovereign neglected this public tribute of respect and devotion to her; but with the *Grand Monarque* the procession of royal pilgrims came to an end. The red tide of revolution arose, and waged war against men's faith, and destroyed its most touching manifestations and its noblest monuments. It broke, however, harmless, at the foot of S. Maximin. Not a stone of the grand old pile was touched, not an altar profaned, not even a picture stolen from the mouldy and unguarded walls; the most precious part of its treasure, the relics of Magdalen, which had been carefully concealed, were found intact, and duly authen-

ticated as before. Ste. Baume was less fortunate; the storm that respected the tomb showed no mercy to the grotto which had witnessed Magdalen's ecstatic communings with her Lord; the hospital, the convent, and the church adjoining it were completely destroyed; nothing remained but a barren rock and a portion of the neighboring forest. In 1822, a partial restoration was effected; the vast and massive monastery was replaced by a temporary building of the lightest and cheapest materials, little better than a lath and plaster shed, to keep the monks under cover; the grotto itself, once so sumptuously adorned by the piety of pilgrims, was left in a state of nakedness and neglect, its costly lamps once abundantly fed with aromatic oils were gone, their lights extinguished, like the faith that had kindled them. The church was rebuilt in the same superficial style as the convent, and solemnly reconsecrated in the presence of forty thousand souls assembled in the forest and down in the plain. But the material temple, great or small, is more easily rebuilt than the spiritual one; the temple of stone was raised up again, but where was the temple of the spirit which had animated it? Where was the architect who would rebuild this, who would collect the scattered fragments, and breathe upon the dead bones, and make them live, and bind them as of yore into a body of devout and simple-hearted worshippers? Many, remembering the by-gone glories of Ste. Baume, wished that a prophet would arise and work this wonder in Provence. Perhaps the wish took the form of a prayer in some loving hearts, and so brought about its accomplishment. The valiant-hearted son of S. Dominic, the Père Lacordaire, was to be the prophet of their desires. He rose

up and upbraided the people of Provence for their ingratitude to the memory of their illustrious patroness, and for their decayed faith, and exhorted them to stir up the dead embers of a devotion that had formerly been the edification and joy of Christendom to repair and beautify the deserted grotto of Mary Magdalen, and rekindle its lamps, and restore the pilgrimage of Ste. Baume in its ancient fervor. The work was one that appealed strongly to the sympathies of the Marseilles; but this was not enough to ensure its success. In order to make the sympathy effectual, the Père Lacordaire needed a helpmate who would go about amongst the people and put their good-will into a practical form for him—some one who would second his exertions by docile and zealous and intelligent co-operation. He looked around him, and his choice fell upon Amélie. He knew her, and thought she was of all others the person best suited to his purpose. It was no easy or pleasant task the setting on foot of a movement such as this; the preliminaries were sure to be full of difficulties, often of the sort that make self-love wince and smart; there was plenty of ridicule in store, a goodly harvest of sneers and snubs to be garnered at the outset, rude opposition to be endured from those who had no faith at all, and chilling indifference from those who looked upon anything like a return to the forms and symbols of the middle ages as poetic enthusiasm not practicable in the XIXth century. It was just the kind of work to put the daughter of S. Dominic to. She did not disappoint the Père Lacordaire, but responded as promptly to the call as his own fiery spirit could have wished. It was in Amélie's house that the eloquent Dominican inaugurated the *œuvre*

of S. Baume, and told the story of the great penitent's life and death. From the salon in the Rue Grignan the burning words of the orator went forth to all Provence and stirred many hearts. A committee was soon formed for raising the necessary funds towards the restoration of the grotto as a preliminary to the reopening of the pilgrimage. The Père Lacordaire, as if the more prominently to record the services Amélie had rendered in the work so far, and to associate her name with its progress, desired that the meetings should be held at her house; and so they were, and continued to be regularly until she left Marseilles for Rome. She lived to see their joint labors crowned with success; the grotto assumed gradually something of its ancient beauty; an inn was built on the plain at the foot of the mountain for the accommodation of travellers who came from a distance, pilgrims were once more seen toiling in great numbers up the steep paths of the forest leading to the grotto, and filling the glade with the sound of canticles, and the feast of S. Magdalen, the 22d of July, was again celebrated with something of the pomp and fervor of olden times.

But events of this stirring and, so to speak, romantic interest were rare in Amélie's life. Her path lay rather along the valleys than upon the heights above. The doors of the Rue Grignan were often open indeed to the wise and learned, and occasionally to the great ones of the earth; but the visits of these were few and far between compared to those of the poor and humble, who besieged it at all hours of the day and night. The poor looked upon it as a centre of their own, where they had a right to come at all times and seasons and make themselves at home. They did this at last so com-

pletely that Amélie was sometimes obliged to slip out by a back door in order to escape from their precious but pitiless importunity. But no importuning, however persistent or unseasonable, could ruffle her unalterable sweetness, or surprise her into a sharp answer or an abrupt ungraciousness of manner. Hers was the charity that is not easily provoked: it made her stern to self, but long-suffering towards others, slow to see evil, softly forbearing to the weaknesses of all.

This home work was only an episode in her everyday labors. There was not a mission, or a hospital, or a refuge, or a good work of any sort in the town, that she had not to do with in one way or another. Just as we often hear it said of a woman of the world, "She is of every *fête*," so it used to be said in Marseilles of Amélie, "She is of every charity." One of the most venerable fathers of the Society of Jesus declared that it was chiefly to her zeal and intelligent exertions that the Jesuits owed the establishment of their mission at Marseilles. The Père de Magdalon looked upon her as his right hand; he enlisted her co-operation in all his undertakings, and he used to say that it was to her he owed in a great measure the success of the Maison de Retraite of S. Barthélémy, the last work of his apostolate, and which he lived to see blessed with such abundant fruits. The *Filles de la Charité* were long the special objects of her liberality and devoted exertions; then came the Sisters of Hope, whose services to the sick are so praiseworthy, and whose presence amongst them was hailed so gratefully by the Marseillese. When the *Petites Sœurs des Puîvres* were in any difficulty, they looked to Amélie to help them out of it, and they speak with effusion still of the many proofs of generosity

they received from her, and of her unfailing readiness to assist them whenever they appealed to her. She seemed to hire herself out as a beast of burden to do the work and the bidding of every one who wanted her. When there was a question of establishing the *Frères Prêcheurs* at Marseilles, she multiplied herself tenfold. No obstacles could deter her in the service of the sons of her beloved S. Dominic; she found a house for them, and paid all the expenses of their installation. But whatever the work was that came under her hand, she did it, and as promptly and earnestly as if it were the one of all others she most delighted in; there was no exclusiveness, no narrowing of her sympathies to an *idle fixe* either in piety or in charity; those who had the privilege of being her fellow-laborers for many years declare they never once knew her charity to flag or fail to answer a fresh demand upon it; the supply was inexhaustible, and seemed to increase in proportion as it spent itself. Her health was wretched and kept her in almost constant physical pain; yet her activity was extraordinary, and, considering the chronic sufferings she had to contend with for the greater part of her life, the amount of work she contrived to get through may be regarded as little short of miraculous. She rose habitually at five, spent several hours in prayer, and assisted at the Holy Sacrifice before beginning the active duties of the day. These lay wherever there were sick to be tended, and sorrowing ones to be comforted, and sinners to be converted. She was a member of the Congregation of S. Elizabeth for visiting the hospitals, and gave a good deal of time to this work, for which she had a particular devotion. Her gentleness and singularly attractive manner fitted her especially for dealing with aching bodies and

sorrowing hearts, and it was not a very rare thing to see Amélie succeed in melting the heart of some obdurate sinner with whom the entreaties and repeated efforts of the chaplain and the nuns had failed. The same sympathetic responsiveness that she threw into so many different good works marked her intercourse with individuals; those whom she was tending or consoling or advising always felt that for the time being they were the chief object of interest to her in life, and that she was giving her whole heart to them. She made this impression perhaps more especially on the poor, to whom the sympathy of those above them has such a charm and such a gift of consolation. An amusing instance of it occurred once in the case of an old woman whom Amélie had been nursing for some time; she put so much goodwill into all she did, and performed the offices of a sick-nurse so affectionately, that the poor old soul believed she had inspired her with some unaccountable personal attachment: she returned it enthusiastically, and was never tired testifying her gratitude and love. One day, however, Amélie arrived in the poor little garret—tidy and clean, thanks to her—but, instead of being welcomed with the usual smiles and embraces, the old woman set her face like a flint, and preserved a sullen silence. For some time she obstinately refused to say what was amiss with her, but finally, shamed by the coaxing and evident distress of her nurse, she confessed that the day before she had had a bitter disappointment. "I thought," she said, "that you loved me, but I find I was under a delusion; you don't care a straw for me; they tell me you do for every sick body in the town just what you have been doing for me." It was with great difficulty that Amélie was able

to console her and obtain her forgiveness for being so universal in her charity.

But though her creed dealt in no exclusions, there were two classes of her fellow-creatures who above the rest had a decided attraction for Amélie : these were prisoners and soldiers. She yearned towards the former with the true spirit of him who loved the publicans and sinners, who gave the first-fruits of his death to one of them on Calvary, and who prayed for them all with his last breath, saying : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do !" The wonders that Amélie worked in the gloomy cells of the Fort St. Nicholas, the sudden and admirable returns to God that she obtained from the condemned, are not to be counted ; not by men, at least. Day after day she was to be found in the midst of them, teaching old men their catechism, comforting and exhorting all, preparing them for death, washing and dressing their sores, combing their hair, performing cheerfully and affectionately the most disgusting offices. Her labors in behalf of the troops are perhaps the most remarkable part of her life. She had for many years been very zealous in her endeavors to promote religious instruction amongst the soldiers, but her mission in this direction dates chiefly from the Crimean war. During this brilliant campaign, which brought so much glory and cost so much blood to the Allied armies, the thought of the sufferings of the soldiers in the trenches and on the battle-fields filled Amélie's heart to the momentary exclusion of all other interests and preoccupations. Her whole time was spent working for them, and begging and praying for them. She inspired all who came near her with something of her own ardor and tenderness in the cause. She set up societies among her friends

for making clothes and lint for the sufferers, and for collecting money to procure all that could comfort and alleviate them. Her efforts were crowned with abundant success. Now, as on many other occasions, money flowed in to her from all sides, sometimes from strangers at a distance, for the fame of her charity had spread much further than the humble daughter of S. Dominic herself suspected, and many benevolent people who wished to give, and knew not how to apply their offerings, sent them to her, satisfied that they would be well and wisely employed. The way in which large sums of money sometimes dropped into her lap, as it were from the sky, at some opportune moment when she was in dire want of it for some case of distress, led many of her humble *protégés* to believe that it came to her miraculously. But, while mindful of their bodies, Amélie's first solicitude was for the souls of the brave fellows who were going out to face death in the service of their country ; while working so hard to procure all that could heal and solace their temporal sufferings, she was laboring still more assiduously in behalf of their spiritual interests. Nor did her efforts confine themselves exclusively to the soldiers, they extended to the officers as well, and much more difficult she often found them to manage than the rough-and-ready men under their command. Many a droll story is still told at Marseilles of the tricks by which they sometimes evaded her attempts to catch them in her zealous toils and make them remember that they had another enemy to fight and to conquer besides the soldiers of Holy Russia. Once two young officers of good family and fortune, whose lives were not the most edifying to the community, were pointed out to Amélie by one of their brother

officers, a fervent Catholic, as fitting subjects for her zeal. He undertook to bring them to the Rue Grignan under the pretence of introducing them to an old and charming friend of his, if Amélie would promise to try and convert them. She promised of course to *try*, and the two scapegraces made their appearance, never suspecting that a trap had been laid for them. The conversation dwelt upon the great topic of the day, the war, Amélie carefully avoiding the most distant allusion to the spiritual condition of her visitors. The young men were charmed with her affability and *esprit*, and, when she asked them to return with their friend in a few days and dine with her, they accepted her invitation with delight. During dinner their hostess alluded to the numerous pilgrimages that were being performed every day to Notre Dame de Garde; few of the soldiers or sailors started for the Crimea from Marseilles without climbing up the hill to salute Our Lady and ask her blessing on their arms. The young men confessed that they had never made the pilgrimage and evinced little admiration for their more devout comrades; Amélie seemed surprised, but not at all scandalized, at the frank admission, and proposed that they should both make the pilgrimage next morning and hear Mass there with her at eight o'clock. They assented with ready courtesy, inwardly treating the expedition as a harmless joke, and took leave of their hostess, very much delighted with her, and not much terrified by the salutary projects that might be lurking in her breast with regard to the morrow. They were at the bottom of the hill punctually at half-past seven, and toiled up to the church, where they expected to see Amélie already on the lookout for them. But they looked round the church and

saw no sight of her. Taking for granted that she was not there, and that something had interfered to prevent her keeping the appointment, they took themselves off with the comfortable feeling of having done their duty, and behaved like gentlemen, and came safe out of it. The morning was raw and cold, and they were both tired after the long pull uphill, so on their way down they turned into a little dairy where hungry pilgrims were comforting themselves with cups of coffee. There was a good fire in the place, and they sat down to enjoy it, and dawdled a good while over their hot coffee, wondering what kind trick of Fortune had prevented the enemy from appearing in the field; when lo! looking up suddenly, they beheld the truant peering in at them through the window. The pair started as if they had seen a ghost. But Amélie knew human nature too well to press her advantage at such a moment; she smiled, shook her finger threateningly, and went her way down the hill, leaving the two young men less triumphant than she had found them, and very anxious to clear themselves of having broken their word to a lady, and eager to redeem it a second time if Amélie desired. She did desire it, and it was not long before one of the two blessed her for having done so. He was ordered off with his regiment soon after, and before setting sail ascended once more to the shrine of Notre Dame de Garde in a different spirit and with a very different purpose.

Her intercourse with the troops during this period gave Amélie an insight into the deplorable ignorance in matters of faith that existed in the majority of them, and the absence of all religious instruction in the army; it filled her with surprise and grief, and she determined to set to

work and bring about a change in both.

Reforms are proverbially difficult, and in any branch of the public service pre-eminently so. But difficulties only stimulate strong hearts to more strenuous efforts. Amélie was, owing to her high intelligence, her well-known virtue, and her widespread relations, better calculated than most people perhaps to succeed in the undertaking; besides, whatever the obstacles were, she never reckoned with human means when God's work was to be done; she called him to the rescue, and left the issue in his hands. It would be impossible to recount all she did and suffered in this most arduous undertaking, the journeys she took, the petitions she drew up, the letters she wrote, the disappointments and antagonism that attended it in the beginning, and the physical and moral fatigue that it involved all through. The frequent and successive journeys of eighteen hours to Paris and the same back would have been a serious trial of strength to a strong person; but to Amélie, whose health was extremely delicate, and who hardly ever knew the sensation of being without pain, most frequently acute and intense pain, the wear and tear of those journeys in the sultry heat of summer and the bitter cold of winter alike must have been terrible. But she made small account of her body, she drove it on like a beast of burden, goading it with the ardor of her spirit, and never gave in to its lamentations until it positively refused to go on. Her own shortcomings were, however, the lightest portion of her difficulties. She had obstacles to overcome on every side, especially in quarters where it was most essential for her to find approval and assistance. Silvio Pellico said it was easier to traverse a battle-field than the

antechamber of a king, and the same may be said most likely of the antechamber of a minister. At least Amélie found it so. Many a brave spirit might well have given up in despair before the contemptuous rudeness and petty opposition of small functionaries, and the inaccessible coldness of great ones, and the disheartening predictions of well-wishers who had gone through similar experiences, and knew what it was to want anything, even in the natural course of things, done at the War Office; but Amélie's courage never flagged for a moment. By degrees her perseverance began to meet with some signs of success. It was known that one military man in high repute supported her views, and was doing his best to enable her to carry them out; this converted others. Several who had in the first instance treated her project as impracticable, or unnecessary, or simply absurd, one after another came over to her; it was not always because she convinced them, but she won them; they might resist her arguments, but it was impossible to come often in contact with her without feeling the contagion of her earnestness and sincerity of purpose. Her labors were finally crowned with abundant success. She obtained all the concessions she asked, and every facility for carrying them out and improving the spiritual condition of the soldiers. One of her chief anxieties had been for the condemned prisoners in the Fort St. Nicholas. She obtained permission for one of the dungeons to be turned into a chapel there, and it was henceforth her delight to go there on the great feasts and decorate the altar, and make it gay with lights and flowers for the captives. A chaplain was appointed to the fort, and he was allowed every facility for the exercise of his ministry.

The little *enfants de troupe* whose youth recommended them to Amélie's solicitude were provided with the needful means of religious instruction by the establishment of a school, over which she herself presided from time to time, cheering on the pupils by good advice, and occasional presents to the most industrious and deserving. General de Courtigis, who commanded the garrison for many years at Marseilles, and left behind him a memory respected by all good men, had been from the first a staunch ally of Amélie's in her endeavors to introduce a Christian spirit amongst both the officers and men. At her suggestion he organized a military Mass every Sunday at the Church of S. Charles, and there a great number of men, with the general at their head, assisted regularly at the Holy Sacrifice. It was a great treat to Amélie, whenever she could find time, to go and assist at it with them. She enjoyed the martial appearance and reverent bearing of the soldiers with a sort of motherly pride, and the sharp word of command, and the clanking of the bayonets when they presented arms at the solemn moment of consecration, used to send a thrill of emotion through her frame that often melted her to tears.

"Oh!" she was heard once to exclaim, on coming out of S. Charles', "what a grand and consoling spectacle it is, to see our soldiers publicly worshipping God! One feels that they must be invincible in battle when they set out with the blessing of God on their arms."

The troops, on their side, repaid her interest in them by the most enthusiastic affection. They used to call her *notre mère* amongst themselves, and it delighted Amélie to hear a grizzly old veteran address her by this familiar name. Some-

times the brave fellows' gratitude expressed itself in a way that was rather trying to their adopted mother. A regiment which had been quartered at Marseilles, and received many proofs of zeal and kindness from Amélie during its stay there, happened to hear, when passing through Lyons some years later, that she was stopping there. They started off at once in full force, and gave her a military serenade under her windows. Amélie, of course, showed herself at the window, and acknowledged the honor, but this did not satisfy the soldiers: nothing would do them but she should come out and shake hands with every man in the regiment.

Much as Amélie shrank from public notice or praise, her humility could not prevent her extraordinary exertions in behalf of the troops, and the success which had attended them, from shining out before men. The nature of the undertaking had necessarily brought her in contact with the most influential military men of the day, both at Marseilles and in Paris. These gentlemen had ample opportunity to appreciate her character and judge of the value of her services; and though so many had opposed her in the beginning, when they saw her labors triumphant, success raised her so highly in their estimation that they thought it would be becoming to offer a public tribute of their esteem and gratitude by decorating her with the Cross of the Legion of Honor. Accordingly, a letter was despatched one day from the War Office, informing the quiet, unpretending friend of the poor soldier that the government, to testify their approval of her conduct, invested her with the most honorable mark of distinction it was in their power to bestow. Amélie received the announcement at first as a joke. The

idea of her going about the world with the Cross or the red ribbon fastened to her black gown, and being greeted with the military salute and presented arms to whenever the symbol caught the eye of a soldier or a sentry, while she threaded her way through the busy streets of Marseilles, struck her as so altogether comical that she could only laugh at it. But neither the authorities nor her friends saw any laughing matter in it; the latter combated her refusal so strongly that Amélie was perplexed; she knew not how to reconcile her deference to their wishes with what appeared to her little short of an act of treason to Christian humility and common sense; they argued that, by accepting the Cross, she would excite a good feeling in the minds of many towards the government, a result which in those turbulent and antagonistic times was always desirable, and, in the next place, it would invest her with a half-official position in certain circumstances that she might find very useful to others in her relations with minor functionaries. This last consideration had some weight with Amélie; she turned it to account, though not in the way her friends desired. She wrote to the minister,

declining gratefully an honor which she did not feel qualified to accept, but requested that he would reward what he was pleased to call her services by granting her a *droit de grâce*. This would entitle her to present petitions for a commutation of sentence in case of military prisoners, and even on certain specified occasions to commute the sentence herself. The privilege was granted at once, and, if ever virtue had a sweet reward in this world, it was when Amélie exercised it for the first time in favor of one of the captives of Fort St. Nicholas. Her friends rejoiced with her, and almost forgave her for refusing the sterile honor of the Cross of the Legion of Honor. They never knew, so carefully did her humility keep its secret, that the government, when granting her the *droit de grâce*, exacted as a condition that she should submit to become a member of the Legion of Honor. It was years after that a friend, who had heard something in high quarters which aroused his suspicions, and who was intimate enough with Amélie to take the liberty of catechising her on the subject, asked point-blank if she was decorated, and under promise of secrecy learned the truth.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.

A DREADFUL DARLING.

MRS S B HOLLY

Christian Union (1870-1893); Mar 10, 1875; 11, 10; American Periodicals

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do—I'll answer Lottie's invitation, and take the answer right to her house after school!"

Now, the invitation from Lottie had of course been written by her mamma, on an elegant sheet of pink note paper; and Mrs. Howland had specially charged Sallie that she was only to write the answer under her own eye, so that it might be done properly. But, alas! three hours of school had totally driven these words of wisdom out of the little scatterbrain's head, and, without more ado, she tore a leaf out of her copy-book, folded it something like a letter, only so crooked, and set to work in good earnest, sticking out her elbows in a very *grasshoppery* fashion, and giving a little sigh of intense earnestness every now and then, which seemed to help her on amazingly.

This was what she wrote, very up-hill, and squeezed into one corner:

"*My Dear Lottie:*

"Miss Sallie Howland will be very happy to come to your party, and I hope you will have lots of mottoes for supper, because I like them very much."

"Your affectionate friend, "SALLY HOWLAND.

"P.S.—Mamma made me a beautiful new India muslin dress, the other day, out of her old mantilla, and I guess I shall wear that. Won't it be lovely? Yours. "SALLY."

Then the dreadful darling begged an envelope of her teacher, "for a very tickular reason," which the teacher gave without asking any questions; and this beautiful note was enclosed and sealed, and addressed on the outside: "to lottie lennox, from Sally howland." After school, down to Lottie's house she trotted, and rang the bell as bold as a lion.

The door was opened by a solemn butler in a white neck-tie, like a minister who certainly looked somewhat astonished at beholding a small child standing on the steps all alone, and holding out such a grimy little note, for she had dropped it in the mud crossing the street. Nothing daunted, Sallie poked it into his hand, saying, "Here—give this to Lottie right away;" and then marched off, quite satisfied with her own way of doing business.

"Why, Sally, what has kept you so long?" asked her mother when she came in.

"Why, mamma," answered the little mischief-maker, quite at her ease, "I only thought I would write an answer to Lottie's note and take the letter myself, so's she'd be sure to get it."

"And what did you say in the note?" cried Mrs. Howland, holding up her hands. "Come right up stairs and tell me all about it!"

So Sally told the whole story; but when she saw her mamma's crimson face and the shocked look that came into her eyes, she grew thoroughly frightened.

"Why, mamma!" she cried, "was I a naughty girl? I didn't mean any harm! Oh, I'm so sorry! I'll never do anything on my own hook again!"

"Oh, Sally! Sally!" exclaimed Mrs. Howland, "what an awful child you are! Will you never stop getting me into scrapes? Pray, my dear little daughter, always ask your mother before you do *anything!* Oh! oh! I am mortified to death!" And, sitting down at her desk, she wrote a hasty note to Mrs. Lenox, explaining what had happened as well as she could, feeling all the while as if she would like to fly up to the moon, and take Sally with her. Did you ever cut such a caper, I wonder?

Well, it couldn't be helped now, and Sally, after a great fit of crying, went to get ready for her walk, determined to keep out of mischief for the rest of that day at least.

But as luck would have it, that very day her mother had company to dinner; and among them was a gentleman who had made a pet of Sally all her life. At dinner he requested to see her; and as a great favor she was allowed to come to dessert. Nurse dressed her very nicely, and when she entered the dining-room, with her long glossy curls, bright eyes and rosy cheeks, she looked such a darling you would never have dreamed what a bother she could be. She said how'd yo do to every one, and then the gentleman who had asked for her took her on his knee, and gave her a nice bunch of raisins off his own plate. Mamma was just thinking, "Dear me, how nicely Sally is behaving; after all, I am really proud of her," when there came an "awful pause" in the conversation. Then Sally's small voice piped up, fearfully distinct in the stillness:

"See here, good people, you must be very careful not to get any spots on this new dessert cloth, for mamma says, it won't look so pretty after it's washed!"

Well, I suppose you know how grown people begin to talk in a tremendous hurry after one of *your* dreadful speeches!

But I must make haste and get on to Wednesday, or my story will be too long. That great day came at last, and by six o'clock our dreadful darling was in such a state of excitement she could hardly stand still while nurse dressed her. In old times we hadn't dreamed of such magnificence for small snips as Valenciennes lace overdresses, and satin slips and boots; but to my mind Sallie looked far better dressed for a child, in her simple muslin frock, with its fluted ruffles, a broad pink sash, and nice little open-worked stockings and black slippers, which were tied with sandals above the instep.

Now you must know that in those days little girls wore clumsy affairs, dubbed "pantalettes," which came down about the ankles, making them look like so many bantams. Sally's mamma was looking at

these nondescript garments, and presently she said thoughtfully, "Nurse, I think those pantalettes are rather plain for a party. I think I will tack on a pair of my handsome undersleeves instead." So the wide undersleeves, with their rich embroidery and deep Brussels lace, took the place of the ruffled pantalettes, and had a very fine effect indeed. Oh, if Mrs. Howland could have known what would happen in consequence!

Such a lovely sight as that party was! For what can be more delightful than to see a crowd of bright-eyed, beautiful children dressed in their best, and dancing to merry music? So thought Mrs. Lenox and her friends, to some of whom she had told the story of Sally's comical note, and who could hardly help laughing whenever they looked at the little monkey who had done such a ridiculous thing. She was rather bashful at first, and Fred Lenox, Lottie's grown up brother, made her blush furiously by saying, with a roguish look, "Miss Sally, when are you going to send me a letter? I hear you write such nice ones!" but she soon recovered, and, presently was dancing with the others, light as a bird on the wing, and perfectly happy.

Of course there was a fine supper of all the things that little folks like best. Fred Lenox made Sally blush again by saying, as he handed her a plateful of "goodies," "Here are 'lots of mottoes' for you Miss Sally. I know you love them!" but she bravely answered, shaking back her curls, "Yes! of course I do! Come and sit by me and I'll pick out a nice one for you!" which pleased him so much that he brought a small footstool beside her chair, and sitting down, helped her open the mottoes.

Ah, dear me! Ten minutes afterwards Mrs. Lenox and Mrs. Howland, who had just arrived, came up behind her chair in time to hear Sally say to Fred, holding out both feet straight before her like a kid doll, "Look here! haven't I got nice pantalettes on? You'd never guess what they were, would you? Why, they are my mamma's best undersleeves!"

Fred stared at her a moment in speechless amazement, and then, oh! how he laughed! Laughed till he nearly tumbled backward off the footstool; and Mrs. Lenox, after one desperate effort, burst out too, while poor Sally looked from one to the other, crying, "What are you laughing at? What did I say wrong? Mamma! do make them stop!"

But it was a little too much; and seizing her dreadful darling's hand mamma hurried her up into the dressing room, half laughing, half crying, with Fred after her, vainly entreating her not to mind it, and going off into fresh fits every time he thought of those pantalettes. Sally had plainly stayed long enough at that party, and was carried severely off, loudly protesting that she had promised to dance the polka with him after supper, and must stay and do it.

Ah well! it is twenty years ago now, and Sally is married, and has dreadful darlings of her own; but she never meets Fred Lenox, who is a grandfather by this time, that she does not wonder if he remembers her speech at his sister's party; and by the comical twinkle that comes into his handsome eyes, I should say it is very likely he does. What do you think about it?

A DREADFUL DARLING.

BY MRS. S. B. HOLLY.

NOW, girls (and boys, too), here is a story I want you to read and take to heart. You all make dreadful speeches in company, and do things by the light of your own wisdom, which horrify your poor mamas and aunts nearly out of their wits; and I only wish I could teach you to *think* before you speak or act, and then decide if it would not be better to keep quiet.

Little Sallie Howland was crying bitterly at her desk. All the other girls were out in the yard, having a royal time, while she was condemned to solitary confinement all recess, for having had five great black marks put against her name during the morning session. I don't know that she was much to be blamed, however; for had she not that morning received an invitation to a delightful party? It was to come off the next day but one, at the house of her dear, particular friend Lottie Lenox; and I wonder which of you would or could study very hard with such a prospect of fun ahead?

Sally was only six years old, but she could read and write well for her age; and I suppose it was just because her little brain was uncommonly active and bright that she got into so many scrapes. Certain it was she was not given to thinking long on any subject; for presently she dried her tears and said to herself, in a soft, triumphant tone:

"Never mind if I am kept in! I know what I'll

A FASHIONABLE EVENT.

I.

MRS. ALDERMAN REIDY was a handsome woman in spite of her forty-five years. What was more important still in her eyes, she piqued herself on being "good style." She dressed with taste. She compared herself favorably with Mrs. Alderman Darcy, who habitually wore sealskins and heavy gold necklaces, and with the lady-mayoress herself, who had been known to say "yez." She was sure there was more of the lady about her than about big, rattling, loud-voiced Mrs. O'Regan, the brewer's wife, who lived on Merrion Square, and who was a "real, blooded lady," being one of the Mooneys of Meath. Besides, Dan—that was her husband, Alderman Reidy—was in the wholesale wine-trade: none of your vulgar retail people. He was even connected with some distilleries. This was eminently respectable. She thought of the Powerses, the Roes, the Guinesses, which brought her ideas right up to the realms of the peerage. Certainly the Reidys might "look high" for their daughter, who was a beauty and had a large fortune.

"What's that daughter of yours doing with herself all the morning?" asked her husband, looking up from his *Freeman*. "Why isn't she down to breakfast?"

"That daughter of mine!"—Dan, I wish you wouldn't be so vulgar. Annette has a headache this morning." Miss Reidy had been christened Maria Anne, according to the wish of an old-fashioned godmother, but early in her life her mother had made the best of it by calling her Annette.

"Faith, it's the hardy ould headache by this time. She has it every morning now. That English finishing-school you sent her to, Maggie, has upset that girl's head in all sorts of ways. I'll bet a fiver it's a yellow-backed novel she has in her fist this minute, if we got a peep at her."

Alderman Dan took a sip of his tea, and, stretching out his legs comfortably on the hearth-rug, plunged into a speech on the education question by Mr. Gladstone.

His wife, in a half-mechanical way, as if it were a habitual exclamation, said, "Dan, you're shocking!" and resumed the study of her newspaper, which was the *Daily Express*, and which con-

tained an account of the dress worn by every lady at yesterday's levee at the Castle.

Mrs. Reidy looked well that morning in her quiet, well-fitting demi-toilette, and occasionally, as she read out in a half-audible murmur, "Lady Mary McGee, by Lady Granard—pearl satin, ruby train, plumes to match," she elevated her head and squared her graceful shoulders with quite the air of a duchess. Indeed, there were few matrons of title presented at that levee she was reading of who could boast of a better "silent presence" than Mrs. Reidy. Nor when she opened her mouth was she in any great danger. Her accent was Dublin, enriched and softened by Galway, her husband's county. It was only in moments of very unguarded converse with intimate friends that she was betrayed by the treacherous "yez," the dropped *h* of Dublin's Cockagne. At length Mrs. Reidy called her husband's attention.

"Dan," said she, "just listen to this: 'Fashionable marriage—Colton and O'Regan. On Monday, at the Madeleine, Paris, the marriage of Miss Bertha O'Regan, daughter of Hugh O'Regan, Esq., J.P., D.L., of Merrion Square, Dublin, and Lord Arthur Colton, A.D.C., was solemnized with great *éclat*. The Right Rev. Monsignor O'Regan officiated, assisted by, etc.' Then there's a great description of the bridesmaids' dresses, and—then it says: 'The ceremony was again performed at the Anglican church in the Rue du Bac according to the Protestant rite.' O Dan! aren't these O'Regans the lucky people?"

"To marry their daughter to a Protestant?"

"Yes, but to a lord, Dan; and they got a dispensation. O Dan! fancy our Annette married to a lord—Lady Colton!"

"I'd see her—a nun first," said Dan, rising and trimming his iron-gray whiskers, and examining his ruddy and good-looking face in the pier-glass.

"Ah! Dan," sighed Mrs. Reidy, "you have no ambition. If you only exerted yourself we might make a good match for Annette."

"The girl herself," said Dan, "I thought, had a fancy for that young Hartigan; and, 'pon my song, the devil a better match I wish her."

"Dan, let me never hear you say that again. I am astonished at you. Young Hartigan, indeed! A briefless barrister!"

"Faith, his brief-bag won't be long empty, I'll be bail. I heard him pleading yesterday, and the whole Four Courts were talking of him. She'll be a long sight better off if she begins life as the companion of an honest young fellow with brains and

pluck than any of your Judy O'Regans with their lordy-dords. I know a girl that began that way, and she don't seem sorry for it —eh, Maggie?—although you might have married an alderman ready-made."

His wife glanced affectionately at him.

"And, for that matter," went on Dan, "Redmond Hartigan is as good as the best of them. He's a scholar of Trinity and comes of decent people."

"Oh! I'll allow he's genteel, and he's real fond of Annette; but Dan, we might look a great deal higher, and we will too. Ah! Dan, if you were only more civil to them at the Castle there's no knowing what they'd do for you."

"They might make a knight of me," interrupted Dan, with a hearty laugh, "like Sir Thady Mulcahey, and you'd be me lady. Begad, Maggie," he added, drawing her towards him and kissing her brow, "sorra lady in the land would become the title better. 'Twill be well for your daughter if she's half as fine a woman, no matter who she marries."

"O Dan! if you'd only make me Lady Reidy!"

Mrs. Reidy's heart was in that aspiration as she laid her hands on her husband's shoulders and looked into his eyes. This was the pinnacle of her dreams. How often had she pictured Dan, his stout calves encased in the silken hose of a court suit, kneeling before the viceregal throne while the lord-lieutenant, striking him on the shoulder with a sword, said, "Arise, Sir Daniel Reidy!" To have the servants address her, "Yes, me lady," "No, me lady!" But Dan, who had a strong sense of humor, together with some mild nationalist opinions, always laughed heartily, as he did on the present occasion.

"Here she comes," he exclaimed suddenly, "and barely in time to give her father a kiss before he leaves for the day."

A pretty girl in a blue morning-gown had entered the room. She ran to her father and embraced him affectionately.

"Dear old dad!" she cried. "I'm late—oh! take care, you'll crush my stephanotis."

She rearranged the pale-pink blossom in her hair. Then she kissed her mother and surveyed herself in the glass.

"Well, Annie, be a good girl and don't let your mother turn your head. I'm off to town; there's Christy with the carriage."

In a few moments he had said good-by and was rolling in his tidy brougham over the gravel of the avenue.

Annette Reidy had been educated at Rathfarnham convent until she was seventeen. Then her mother decided that she should have a year at what is called a "finishing-school" in England. This was to give her "tone." These finishing-schools are wonderful institutions. They undertake to counteract in one year what a convent-school has been doing in ten. Alas! could the mother-superior of Rathfarnham have seen what a change had been wrought in the modest young virgin she had sent from her roof with blessings two years ago, she would have been shocked. Annette had learned how to keep her complexion pale. She knew the right shade to pencil her eyebrows. She had become an enthusiastic waltzer. She had learned that a little sal-volatile in black coffee, taken immediately before going to a party, makes the eyes lustrous. At supper she made a point of criticising the sherry. She had the "Rotten Row stare": while she addressed one person her eyes boldly followed the movements of somebody else. Her conversation was as "horsey" as she could make it; she even studied the "sporting intelligence" in the daily papers and tried to learn something of the horses' names and the betting, but in this she got rather mixed. All this was "tone"—the manner of the best society as conscientiously extracted by her teachers from the most recent novels, especially those of "Ouida." At bottom the girl had a good heart. But then she was only eighteen and had spent a year at an English finishing-school.

Annette herself was a close student of "Ouida." The titled military man, *blasé* of the pleasures of "life," yet able to toss a "cad" over a house with one scented hand, was her ideal hero.

This morning, before coming down to her late breakfast (she had had a cup of chocolate in bed, like the *Princess Napraxine*), she had read carefully the *Daily Express*. The *Express*, being the "Castle" organ, is supposed to have the most accurate information on the affairs of the viceregal court. She had devoured every line of the account of the fashionable marriage of Bertha O'Regan to Lord Arthur Colton, A.D.C. (These letters, dear reader, mean aide-de-camp—in the present instance aide-de-camp to the lord-lieutenant.) Bertha had been a school-fellow of hers for a while, but had gone to a different finishing-school. "Blissful Bertha!" thought Annette; and only she had a good little heart in spite of her folly, I would say she was consumed with envy. "Blissful Bertha! Shall I ever make

a marriage like that?" It was with this thought buzzing in her head she entered the breakfast-room.

"Mother," she said, when Alderman Dan had driven away for town (I forgot to say they were living in a handsome villa on the Blackrock road whose grounds overlooked the sea), "I have made up my mind to one thing: father must take us to the levee. We must be presented."

Her mother looked at her admiringly and then heaved a little sigh. .

"Ah!" said she, "your father is a queer man, Annette. He has no ambition at all. I believe, he'd rather be spouting at the corporation than mixing with the best society."

"Well, he'll have to get some ambition, mamma. He is an alderman, and as such he and his family have a right to be presented at the Castle. The lady-mayoress will be our sponsor. And, what's more, he'll have to bring us at once, for I want to go to St. Patrick's ball. All the girls are going, and O mamma! think of the aides-de-camp!"

"Yes, my daughter, you shall go," said Mrs. Alderman Reidy emphatically, as if rising to a proper sense of the situation. "My daughter's prospects are not to be blighted because her father is unambitious. Masha, Annette, did you see the account of Bertha O'Regan's wedding?"

"Didn't I, though?" exclaimed the daughter, casting up her eyes; and then, dear reader, they entered into a discussion of the bridesmaids' dresses—a theme into which I could not dare to follow them. Soon, however, Annette said:

"Marrying a lord, mamma! Fancy, marrying a lord!"

"Would you like to marry one, Annette?" asked her mother, with a furtive look.

"A lord and an officer too!" went on Annette, still in a reverie. "Is it would I like to marry one, mamma? O mamma! could I dare to dream of such a glory? A lord and an officer! Ay, even a lord's son or a lord's cousin! Why, mamma, we would then be in the aristocracy, especially if he was an officer." Take care, dear reader, and don't misunderstand her: she does not mean a policeman. There is only one officer in the world to the eyes of a girl who has been to an English finishing-school—the commissioned officer in her Majesty Queen Victoria's army.

"Why, then," said her mother, tossing her head and drawing herself up, "I don't see why we haven't as good a right to enter the aristocracy as the O'Regans, even if Judy O'Regan is a

Mooney of Meath. You're an only daughter and a beauty, and there isn't a girl in Dublin has a bigger fortune. And now, Annette," added Mrs. Reidy, and the furtive look returned, "I am glad to see that little affair with Redmond Hartigan is all forgotten. A briefless barrister!"

Annette sighed.

"Ah! yes," she said; "Redmond is a nice fellow, a noble fellow, and I am very fond of him. But he has no position, no handle to his name—no nothing. What's the law? True, he is professional; but professional people nowadays are looked on as little better than being in trade. That's what I heard an officer saying to Miss Dooley at the Mansion House ball. Oh! no; Redmond must be given up."

"Bravely spoken, Annette—bravely spoken!" Mrs. Reidy drew her daughter towards her and kissed her. "You *shall* go to the levee and to St. Patrick's ball. You *shall* make a fashionable match. Your father thinks we are silly. He shall see."

III.

It was a day of excitement at the United Service Club in Stephen's Green. The old colonel who was fond of taking the air and ogling the passers-by from a camp-stool on the steps was obliged to swear in Hindostanee a dozen times at the fussy subalterns who, running in and out, trod on his patent-leather shoes. The steward was tired supplying the bar with materials for brandy-and-sodas.

It was simply the day of one of the great English races—the Oaks. The members of the club, being military men, were betting freely. Almost all had made books. There were sweepstakes for old fogies who did not bet, but who liked to have a hand in the fun.

The excitement only really began towards the afternoon, towards the hour when the race was about to be run. Telegraph-boys were running in every moment with "flimsies" announcing the state of the betting at Tattersall's and on the course.

The young men afforded an amusing study to some of the cooler heads who lounged in easy-chairs in the bay-window or in the smoking-room. These young fellows—bronzed, athletic young soldiers of the line regiments for the most part, with not over-much money—took the same healthy delight in a bit of excitement that any other youths used to hard work in the open

air do. They enjoyed it like jolly plough-boys. The subtle charm they felt was in the thought that this was "life." They had two models among their seniors to imitate. One was the languid, cool man of the world who made bets with a quiet nod and never got excited. The other was the "plunger," who dressed rather "loudly" and took every one into his confidence as to his heavy gambling transactions. The former model was the most admired, but the blood of youth could not be restrained sufficiently to imitate it.

Between the hours of three and four telegrams poured in like a fusilade. The members were asking each other, "Do you know anything?" "What have you got?" One would receive a wire from his "tout" containing the very latest "straight tip." He would toss it to the others and rush wildly out to seek some seedy bookmaker, dodging the police in Grafton Street or at the corner of Exchange Court, in the hope that even at that late hour he might be induced to lay odds. They were satisfied; this was "life." For the existence led by the "Household fellows"—the curled darlings of the Household troops—is as much a sealed book to the subaltern of the "line" as it is to the ordinary civilian.

At length all was over. The race was run. Bets were settled. Half an hour of white heat when the news came, half an hour of red heat, and the club gradually cooled off and pursued its ordinary tenor.

But to-day one murmur kept alive when all else was quiet.

A dapper little fellow, with red hair and a round, good-natured face, entered the smoking-room.

"Say, fellows," he said, "Reggie Whiffletree says he's broke. He's taking on bad—drinking. Come along and see him."

About half a dozen sympathizers followed him.

Captain the Honorable Reginald Whiffletree was seated at a table drinking brandy-pawnee as fast as a waiter could bring it to him. His two legs were stretched out straight, making an inverted letter V. One hand was on the table grasping a glass. His chin was on his breast. He was making little, weak kicks at an attendant who was trying to gather up a pack of cards that was scattered at his feet.

"What's the matter with old Whiffle?" says one of the sympathizers, lighting a cigar. "What's he been doing with the cards? Eh, old chap? What are you pelting the cards about for?"

"'V' had to shell out my last fifty-pun' note to that kid over

there at 'Nap,' " says Whiffle, wobbling his head in the direction of a pale young man with an eye-glass who was picking his teeth and sipping a glass of sherry and bitters.

"Cheer up, old boy!" says another sympathizer, giving him a dig in the ribs. "You an't broke?"

"Dead-broke!" says Whiffle, with an oath and a groan. "Tim, — — — more pawnee, you.— — —!" The dashes, dear reader, represent expletives and epithets.

"What! Can't you settle up?"

"Ruined, ruined, ruined at Tattersall's! Man alive, don't you hear? Ruined at Tattersall's! Do you hear now?"

He would have been very deaf had he not heard that roar.

"You see," explained the little red-haired man, who stood over Whiffletree as a surgeon might over a case in presence of a class of pupils—"you see, he stood to win ten thousand on the Golightly mare, and had Scranton backed for a place. Besides, he laid odds against two of the placed horses. His book is in a deuce of a mess. There was an old bet to be paid up at Tattersall's that he had fixed for doubles or quits on to-day's race. Besides that, the Boulogne fellows wrote to him yesterday threatening to post him if he didn't pay up. I'm afraid it's a bad case, boys."

"Pawnee! pawnee! It's a — of a bad case," roared the patient. "I'm done."

"If he can't raise thirty thousand within the next two or three days it's all up with him."

"What'll happen?"

"He'll be expelled from Tattersall's and the Jockey Club, and be posted in Paris, and have to scoot to America."

The others looked on, sympathetic and glum.

It was remarkable that it was the junior members of the club who took this friendly interest in Whiffletree. The others did not seem to mind him. Whiffletree was the senior by many years of the eldest of his sympathizers. This might have been accounted for by the fact that he was only home from India on leave of absence.

The Hon. Reginald Whiffletree was sixth son of the late Lord Coachandsfour and sixth brother of the present lord. At first he had been in a crack Hussar regiment. Having run through his money, he found it expedient to exchange into a line regiment embarking for India. But the line regiment was ordered home after a year, and Whiffletree did not want to go home. So he exchanged into the native service, getting command of a

troop of Sepoy cavalry. Thus his old comrades in arms lost sight of him for several years. Now he was home on a furlough.

At last a thin voice broke the gloom. It belonged to the pale young man with the eye-glass. He had been A.D.C. to the lord-lieutenant for the past twelve months, and was consequently reputed to "know the town."

"I say," he said, "why don't Whiffle marry an alderman's daughter?"

The others looked at him in pitying amazement.

"It's a desperate case," he went on, "and requires a desperate remedy."

"Don't see your remedy," said somebody.

"Aldermen rolling in tin," said the A.D.C., "dying to catch us fellows for their daughters."

"Don't see your remedy yet. Whiffle must be paid up within a week or fly. Fellow can't marry an alderman by electricity."

"You're a fool!" said the A.D.C. "If we see him in train to marry an aldermaness we can induce the bookmakers to wait. They will hold off awhile and give him a chance, if we only say the word."

It was with an envious admiration Whiffletree's sympathizers now gazed on this budding Wellington.

"Know e'er an aldermaness?" asked one at length.

"Yes," said the strategist. "Have the very thing in my eye. Daughter of the richest alderman in town—name, I believe, Reidy. Met her mother and herself at the lord-mayor's orgie the other night. Both of them dying to secure either a title or a military man, so as to get into our world. Deuced impertinence, but suits Whiffletree's bill now. Mother even went so far as to ask me did I know any eligible young man in my regiment looking for money and a handsome girl. Begad, I'll go see her this very evening and bring Whiffle!"

"Hurray! hurray! Heaw! heaw!" cried the others in chorus. "Whiffle, do you hear?"

Whiffle had fallen asleep.

They shook him up.

"Say, old boy, it's all right. Dalby's fixed it up. You are to marry an alderman's daughter. It's a come-down for you, you know. But there's nothing else for it. It's better than being posted at Tattersall's."

Mrs. Alderman Reidy and her daughter had one of their wishes gratified. They were "presented" at the mock court which the viceroy of Ireland holds at Dublin Castle. Dan appeared in all the glory of a brown velvet and silver court suit, with ruffles and sword to match. The sword tickled his fancy immensely. It reminded him of a skewer. Over all he cast his aldermanic robes of scarlet and sable, and carried a cocked hat under his arm. His wife and daughter were enraptured.

They wore ostrich-plumes in their hair. At court plumes are *de rigueur*. Their dresses I don't pretend to describe; they were cut low. For two mortal hours they stood in a corridor, jammed, and another hour they spent on their poor feet in the Throne Room. At first the glitter of uniforms, the dazzle of jewels and rich dresses, the important air of gentlemen-ushers, the court ceremonial overawed them; but a severe weariness in the calves of the legs recalled them to a sense of human things.

At length their turn came. A coarse-featured English earl, with fiery-red hair and beard and the air of a *distract* cattle-show judge, stood on a dais with his wife. Both seemed extremely bored and at little pains to disguise the fact. "How d'ye do, Alderman Reidy? Charmed to see you—men of your stamp," says his excellency. "Delighted to see you, Mrs. Reidy," says the countess. "How charming your daughter is! Your plumes become you, Miss Reidy. Throng here to-day, isn't there?" A set speech, names only changed. Mrs. Alderman Reidy and Miss Reidy kiss her hand, curtsy low, and pass on. 'Tis over! Now to find the carriage and get home as fast as possible. The Reidys have been presented at the Castle!

Next day a description of their dresses appeared among columns of similar paragraphs in not only the faithful *Daily Express*, but also in the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Irish Times*, dozens and dozens of copies of which they purchased and sent to every friend they could think of in any quarter of the globe.

The invitation to the St. Patrick's ball duly followed. What more was needed to fill Annette's and her mamma's cup of glory? A suitor for Annette's hand who would be either a lord or an officer. Lo! he came—came in the person of Captain the Honorable Reginald Whiffletree—a lord's son, a lord's brother, an honorable, and an officer!

The St. Patrick's ball is one of the "duty" balls given by the Irish viceroy to conciliate the tradesmen who put the royal arms

over their doors and to gracefully compliment the national sentiment. It is held on the evening of St. Patrick's day. Loyalist squires who curse the pope nevertheless honor the occasion, and bring their wives and daughters up to town to "rally round the throne." The professional classes, headed by the surgeons-in-ordinary and the learned sergeants, make a strong showing there; for, since the Union, law and medicine occupy in Dublin the place of the old aristocracy and live in its mansions. Needless to say the officers of the garrison and the irresistible A.D.C.'s muster in full uniform. On this occasion only, certain wholesale grocers' wives are permitted the fearful joy of rubbing trains with certain peeresses. The latter call the affair an awful mixum gatherum, and attend it as they would a charity bazaar, "to help the poor viceroy through with it." The supper may or may not be good, according to the temperament of the lord-lieutenant; but Liddel's band always plays the latest waltzes in a masterly style.

Annette and her mamma enjoyed themselves hugely. The Honorable Reginald Whiffletree's sympathetic club-chums, meaning business, bestowed "the military" on them to their hearts' content. Alas! mother and daughter waltzed and waltzed. Annette had five different rents to show in her train, made by spurs. Just fancy! Wasn't it delightful? Early in the evening Dan found out that the port was good, and disappeared somewhere.

Redmond Hartigan was there, noble-browed and *distingué* in spite of his plain coat. Ah! but Offenbach will tell you how heavily handicapped even the *cordon bleu* of a prince is when a military uniform is in competition. Annette gave two dances to Redmond—quadrilles. Redmond disapproved of round dances; besides, the sons of Mars did not want quadrilles.

Redmond sat them out. He redeclared his love for Annette and besought her to marry him. Last week he had won a great popular case, and that day he had received from a deputation of priests and laymen an invitation to contest a seat in Parliament. He had just been awarded a moderatorship in Trinity. A bright career was opening before him.

Annette wavered. She really cared for Redmond; and don't forget I said she had a good little heart, if a foolish little head. Redmond caught her hand and entreated with passionate eagerness.

But just then came along her mother leaning on the arm of a resplendent hussar, all gold lace, silk tights, patent leather, and "peerage bouquet," who told Miss Reidy the next dance was his. Ah! your musty lawyers.

In sitting out his second quadrille Redmond received a blank dismissal. Then he grew what Annette called "strange." He warned her against Whiffletree. Surely she would not dream of marrying a man who was not a Catholic? Annette set this down to jealousy, and was immensely flattered until he said the captain was a blackleg; then she was pleased to be indignant.

"At least," asked Redmond, "if you are determined to marry him, for God's sake delay the day as long as possible. I fancy I can find out something that may convince you that he is a scoundrel."

"Sir," said Annette, rising, "this is intolerable. Take me to my mother."

v.

"Why, Annette Reidy!"

"Why, Bridget Quin, who'd ever dream of meeting you at a Castle ball?"

It was a very beautiful girl, very beautifully dressed—an old school-fellow of Annette's, whom she had not seen since she had left Rathfarnham.

"Gracious! Bridget, you look perfectly lovely. How you've improved!"

"And you!"

They escaped from their partners and got into a corner, and began to chat, as girls who have been school-fellows, and who have not met for two years, chat.

Captain Whiffletree, who was whirling past in a polka, shook his programme at Annette—a signal to be ready for the next dance, which she had promised to him.

"O Annette! I wanted to talk to you about that man. I have heard the gossip about you. Do you know he is a Protestant?"

"Yes. What about it?"

"He is paying his addresses to you?"

"Oh! yes. Well?"

"Annette, you surely do not think of marrying him?"

"And why not, Miss Biddy, if I like him?"

Bridget Quin's thoughtful face grew sad.

"Annette, you shock me," she said. "Do you not know what the church thinks of such marriages?"

"Oh! well," said Annette, with a toss of her head, "there are exceptions. 'Tisn't every day girls like us get a chance of marrying into the peerage."

Bridget, smiled in a peculiar way.

"Besides," added Annette, "it's all right when you get a dispensation."

"Nothing can dispense unhappiness, dear; and it is not without good reason the church frowns on all mixed marriages."

"Bah! I always knew you were a prude. Suppose you wanted to marry a Protestant yourself?"

"I would not want to do so. If I loved any one very dearly, and if he were not a Catholic and would not become one, I would die an old maid sooner than marry him."

"Nonsense, girl dear! If you got the chance of marrying an honorable, a peer's son indeed, you'd be the very first to do it, even if he was a Turk."

"Annette, you are really shocking. That English school you've been at has changed you more than I could believe. But don't you know, dear, who Captain Whiffletree is? Papa says he is a bad man."

"Papa, indeed!" exclaimed Annette, in high dudgeon. "Who's your papa, I'd like to know? What can you or your papa know about people like the Honorable Captain Whiffletree, Bridget Quin? Indeed, it's in a hurry you ought to be to change that common name. Quin!—Biddy!"

Bridget was not angry. She smiled, a little sadly.

"Biddy is not my name," she said. "I was christened Bridget—my mother's name. It is a good name, a revered name where I live, the name of one of the noblest women that ever glorified her sex—St. Bridget of Kildare!"

"Lady Bridget, your aunt is beckoning to you. She asked me to bring you to her at once."

It was Captain Whiffletree who stood over them, offering his arm to Bridget Quin.

"Excuse me for robbing you of so fair a partner, Miss Reidy," he went on, "but I will return when I cross the room, and," he added, with a fascinating smirk and dropping his voice, "try to make amends by offering you myself."

"Lady Bridget!" Before Annette had aroused from her astonishment at the title she fancied she heard, the captain, having escorted her school-fellow to her aunt, was whirling herself around the waxed floor to the cadences of Waldteufel's "Geliebt und Verloren."

Half an hour later Annette was by Bridget Quin's side again.

"O Lady Bridget! why didn't you tell me?"

"I thought you knew. Don't Lady Bridget me, Annette. I

am still Bridget and shall always be Bridget to you, dear, though you don't like the name!"

"Oh! how horrid you must have thought me!"

"Never mind, dear," said the other, with a sweet smile. "You only amused me. I knew then you had not heard of the change in our condition."

"But I had no idea your father was made a lord or had any chance of being made one. I thought you were very poor."

"So we were, dear, very poor; and two years ago my father—good man!—had as little idea there was a peerage awaiting him as you had yourself. You see, the title was in abeyance for two generations, and as an uncle and two nephews stood between him and it, even if it were restored, he never bothered his dear old head about it. But my granduncle, it appears, kept the thing stirring, and the title was suddenly restored to him shortly after I left school. One of the nephews had died of consumption a year before; the other was shot in a gambling quarrel in a California mining camp. The poor old man with his peerage was heart-broken and bed-ridden with gout. He sent for my father, who had thus become titular heir, and willed him all his immense estates to enable him to keep up the dignity. So there, Annie dear, is our little romance. That is how my father has become Earl of Owney and Arra in the peerage of Ireland, Viscount Templemore of the United Kingdom, and how your old school-fellow, his eldest daughter, is Lady Bridget Agnes O'Brien Delacy Quin and the possessor of a handsome dowry."

It would be quite futile, dear reader, to attempt to depict the awesome admiration with which our poor little Annette now regarded her former schoolmate.

"And now," she said at length, "I suppose there are all sorts of lords and dukes and earls, not to speak of honorables, asking you to marry them. A beauty and a lady of title! O Lady Bridget!"

Lady Bridget laughed.

"Not quite so bad as that," she said; "there are plenty of titled suitors, to be sure, but papa puts a damper on the most of them after he gets the answer to one question: 'Are you a Catholic'?"

"Is there no eligible Catholic, then?" asked Annette with interest.

"Oh! yes, several. One in particular my father is very anxious I should accept. A very nice fellow, too—the Marquis of Wexford. He is most devoted."

"And do you like him?"

"Very much indeed. I am very sorry for him."

"Why? Aren't you going to accept him?"

"Oh! no. I had made my choice long before I met him. By the way, you must promise to be present at *my* little ceremony."

"Why, yes!" said Annette, delighted. "That will be perfectly lovely. Who is he? When is it to be? Tell me everything."

"My reception is to take place on the 20th."

"Your reception!"

"Yes. This is my last party, dear. I am to be received at Rathfarnham convent on the 20th of this month." And Bridget, taking both Annette's hands in hers, looked tenderly into her eyes. "Congratulate me, dear."

But the look of blank amazement on Annette's face was too much for even the solemnity of this announcement. Bridget laughed and said: "Well, you are a droll child, Annette!"

Nevertheless Annette's serious and wondering look did not depart, even after a galop with Captain Whiffletree. She carried it home in the carriage with her, notwithstanding her mother's account of the raptures of the night, and notwithstanding the fact that Alderman Dan snored in blissful sleep in the seat in front of her. The meeting with Bridget Quin, Bridget's words, her resolution, affected her suddenly and profoundly. She contrasted herself with Bridget and felt shocked. Like a revelation her conduct flashed upon her in its true light. How frivolous, how wicked it seemed to her! On what a precipice was she rushing!

VI.

It was a severe fit while it lasted. Annette locked herself in her room for two days and meditated on all she had heard from Bridget Quin. She resolved to attend her reception, which was to take place on the following day, the 20th. Bridget's words about mixed marriages—and of course she had said more than I have found necessary to report—haunted her. She cast out of her mind Captain Whiffletree and his uniform and his courtesy-title. She grew so austere that she would not even allow Redmond Hartigan back instead, but had half resolved to inform reverend mother to-morrow that she intended to follow Bridget Quin's example and to "enter."

It is remarkable with girls of Annette's disposition that when

they are brought to disapprove of any course of action they have been pursuing they straightway make a rush to the opposite extreme. Horace notices the same thing about a certain class of men whom he calls "*stulti*." It is due to a want of balance. Of course Annette's "entering" would mean a nine days' visit to the kindly-shrewd reverend mother, who would restore her to her friends in every way a better and a wiser girl.

Nor can I say how much of their effect Bridget Quin's counsel and example owed to the fact that Annette's old school-fellow proved to be a peer's daughter, a titled heiress, and a beauty. In these cases when the effect is produced it is ungenerous to be too critical of the cause.

Annette was doing nicely. She had deliberately read a chapter and a half of *The Religious Life*, and had made up her mind to have a long consultation with her confessor that evening.

This gave her such a sense of satisfaction that she thought she might while away a few minutes with a novel.

As fate would have it, it was a novel by "Ouida."

Annette read about military heroes who had "seen life." This naturally led her to think of Whiffletree. Had *he* not seen life? Had *he* not hunted with the Quorn, stalked royals in the Highlands, flirted with maids of honor, supped in the Bréda Quartier, entertained princes and ambassadors at the Star and Garter, enjoyed pleasant hours in *cabinets particuliers* at Vélours and the Maison Dorée? Had *he* not owned race-horses and gone through a campaign in Afghanistan? Did not the blood of his Crusader ancestors assert itself in spite of the carbuncle that broke the arched line of his aristocratic nose? Was not his name Reginald, and his brother, Bertie Cecil, a member of the House of Peers? *O ciel! ay de mi!* was *he* not a veritable personage stepped out of "Ouida's" enchanted page? And was not *he—he*, the Honorable Reginald Vivian Cecil Granville-Tenterden De Courcy Whiffletree—actually at the feet of her—of her, Annette Reidy—lying there on the plush-covered sofa and gazing through the window on the roof of her mother's new conservatory?

There was a knock at Annette's door. It was the English footman whom Mrs. Reidy had persuaded the pliable Dan to engage.

"Your mother, Miss Hannette, requests you to go to the drawing-room at once, which Captain Whiffletree and Lord Haladyn is awaiting there."

Annette stood irresolute. Would she double-lock her door

and send word that she was at home to nobody to-day? To-morrow would be Bridget's reception; to-night she could see her confessor. O guardian angel! push her back into the peace of her chamber and the grace of her good resolutions. Let not the frail bark adventure to-night the troubrous waters of temptation! To-morrow—give her till to-morrow, till the arms of reverend mother enfold her, until within that serene harbor she is braced for her voyage by sage counsel and guarded by true friends' help!

Who can fathom the designs of Providence, who plans for the sparrow on the house-top?

What prompted Mrs. Alderman Reidy to follow the stately John Thomas to her daughter's room; to seize a hair-brush and give a few artistic touches to Annette's front hair; to say, "Annette, you're looking *positively lovely* to-day, whatever you've been doing to yourself. Come down at once, child; Captain Whiffletree and his cousin, Lord Aladyn, are below—his cousin, mind, an awful swell. I think he's going to—well, to say something to you to-day. Come along, quick!"—what prompted Mrs. Reidy to do this? What a silly question! She did it anyway, and, taking her daughter by the arm, tripped away with her to the drawing-room.

Alas! that I should have to tell it. Annette did not go to Bridget Quin's reception next day at Rathfarnham. She and her mother went to Baldoyle Races with Captain Whiffletree in Lord Aladyn's drag.

When two headstrong women set their hearts on a thing, what can one man, their husband and father, do? If he be a strong man and disapprove of the thing, he may fight, and may or may not win. But if, like Dan Reidy, he be weak and easy-going, and admire his wife, whose boast it is that she can twist him round her finger, there is only one issue to the unequal contest.

Dan strongly disapproved of his daughter's marrying a non-Catholic, although at the bottom of his heart he was himself flattered at the idea of becoming father-in-law to a "sprig of nobility." He made an honest protest; and his struggle, if weak, was sincere.

But when he was informed that Captain Whiffletree had proposed for Annette, and that Annette had accepted him subject to her father's consent, and when Mrs. Reidy plied all her wisely arts of persuasion and coercion, skilfully using the example of the O'Regans, Dan feebly struck his colors.

He renewed the contest once after an interview with the priest of his parish. But it was too late; he had given his consent, the engagement had been announced, and Mrs. Reidy only smiled at him. Dan, shamefaced, hid himself thenceforth from the venerable priest, whom he both feared and revered.

Whiffletree's creditors, when the engagement was put beyond all doubt, complaisantly accepted his promissory notes, which result of their brilliant diplomacy his sympathizers and himself triumphantly celebrated in a noisy supper at the club.

There was one thing that Dan held out for. The day after St. Patrick's ball Redmond Hartigan had asked him as a special favor, in case of Annette's engagement to Whiffletree, to fix the date of the marriage for as late a day as possible. "I'll give you my word and honor on that at least, Reddy, my boy," Dan had answered, squeezing his fingers with emotion. "Dang me if I know what's come over the girl that she won't have you!" Redmond had then left Dublin for a prolonged trip in the East and had not yet returned.

Now that Whiffletree and Annette were engaged, Dan stoutly battled for this stipulation.

"By my word, Maggie," he said, "it goes to my heart to think of that fine young fellow and the way he felt and the way we're treating him. I'll bet he's fonder of the girl this minute than her Englishman has it in his gizzard to be, for all his blue blood. No! by the big gun of Athlone, Maggie, I'll not give in to ye in this. I pledged my honor to the boy that he'd have a long day, and he'll have it, as sure as my name is Dan Reidy—four months, not an hour less. 'Tis the laste ye may do for him after throwing him over like a bad shilling."

Dan's idea was that Redmond had asked him to delay the date of the marriage on the same principle that criminals sentenced to death by Lord Norbury used to beseech for "a long day, me lord!"

Mrs. Reidy herself was touched and wiped away something like a tear with the corner of her handkerchief as she admitted, "Dan dear, he really was very fond of her." But the thought only made her more anxious to have the marriage over at once. Now that it was inevitable, now that her ambition was on the eve of being satisfied, she began to experience a mingled feeling of shame and temerity at the deed. She felt like Macbeth exactly:

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly."

Whiffletree, too, pressed with singular eagerness for an immediate crowning of his happiness. Annette, in the background, with a feeling something like her mother's, modestly countenanced these demands.

But Dan held his ground sturdily in keeping his promise to bestow this last sad favor on his friend.

So it was arranged that Annette's marriage with Captain Whiffletree was not to take place till four months after their engagement.

VII.

After all, four months was not so long a term and gave Annette barely time to prepare her magnificent trousseau.

The marriage had to take place in Liverpool. The ecclesiastical authorities of Dublin, with stern wisdom, have absolutely forbidden mixed marriages to be solemnized in any church within their diocese.

There was to be but a single ceremony. Captain Whiffletree did not press to have the marriage performed again in a Protestant church. This removed some of the difficulty Dan met with in procuring the dispensation.

Whiffletree wished the event to go off as quietly as possible. Dan was anxious for a "blow-out." But Annette, sure of the main thing, agreed with her prospective husband in desiring a quiet wedding. As for Mrs. Alderman Reidy, her courage had oozed out at her fingers' ends, and—never an envious, only a vain and emulous, little woman—she had no anxiety to exploit the occasion to the discomfiture of her Dublin friends.

One of the O'Regan girls, considering that the Reidys were now about to enter their sphere, in an extraordinary burst of generosity consented to act as Annette's bridesmaid. Whiffletree's best man was the red-haired youth who had been one of his most active sympathizers at the club.

I cannot say it promised to be a very jolly affair. The bridegroom was pale in spite of what several years of India's sun and brandy-pawnee had done to his complexion. Annette did not feel nice at all; she tried her best to forget what she was about to do—to plunge into it, as it were, with her eyes shut. Her mamma did not cease crying the whole morning. As for Alderman Dan, he and the red-haired groomsman had been taking "nips" of brandy and soda from an early hour, and looked almost as watery about the eyes as Mrs. Dan herself.

"Whiffle, old boy," says Dan—and these were his last words to his son-in-law-apparent before they left the hotel—"take a horn to give you courage." And Whiffle did.

The ceremony began. What a desecration! My pen hesitates to go on. Annette looked round the church with a frightened feeling. Was that Redmond's face behind a pillar?

The priest had no heart in uniting this fair Catholic maiden to a man of a different religion. He asked in a loud voice the question as to whether any one knew of a reason why the marriage should not proceed, and even paused a moment when he had asked it.

There was a solemn silence. The bridegroom's hand shook.
"Go on!" he said.

The priest looked at him surprised, then repeated the question, and paused again.

Annette felt ready to faint. Was that Redmond's face?

"Can't you go on, confound it!" said Whiffletree, the tension getting the better of his broken nerves.

"Hold! Hold!"

What is that strident voice from the end of the church?
What is that commotion?

"Hold! This marriage cannot proceed! For God's sake stop!"

Who is this running down the church with half a dozen men and one woman at his heels? It is Redmond Hartigan.

Breathless he runs to the altar.

"Stop before you commit a sacrilege!" he cries. "I have brought Captain Whiffletree's wife with me from India. Here she is!"

A veiled lady advanced.

Where is Whiffletree? No one saw him disappear, yet he has fled.

Annette, white and frightened, stood alone before the altar.

Redmond had gone to India on a hint from no less a person than Viscount Templemore, Bridget Quin's father. The latter had learned something which led him to be suspicious of Whiffletree—something of which, in a less definite way, Redmond had also heard—and when his daughter told him that Whiffletree was proposing to marry a friend of hers he interested himself in the matter, and, at Bridget's suggestion, sent for Redmond.

Redmond's expedition seemed as futile as it was arduous. His information was of the vaguest kind, and probably unre-

liable. In Nowshera he learned that Whiffletree had admitted once to have been married, but had given out that his wife had died. The last station he had been quartered in was one of the most remote of the hill stations of the Punjab. Redmond with tremendous difficulty made his way there. He found one troop of Sepoy cavalry—Whiffletree's troop—under the command of native officers, and in a bungalow in their midst the captain's wife, living there contentedly with two children and quietly awaiting her husband's return, which she did not look for till the expiration of his leave of absence. She was a comely but commonplace woman. She had been the widow of a white sergeant-major, and thought her lot a happy one in being the wife of a captain, even though she had to spend her lifetime in the jungle.

She had been held a prisoner there, unknown to herself, by her husband's command, and it required the full force of the letters with which Lord Templemore had supplied Redmond to persuade Whiffletree's Sepoy lieutenant to permit her to leave the station.*

The fair reader wants to know the sequel.

Well, Annette fled for refuge to Rathfarnham, where during a series of retreats she received from warm and devoted hearts consolation and—congratulation.

Poor Mrs. Reidy and Alderman Dan spent six months on the Continent, hiding their diminished heads.

Three years afterwards there was a wedding. No mixed marriage this time; no giddy girl of eighteen, but a woman of twenty-one, whom a terrible experience had chastened and made wiser than her years. And the bridegroom? Her deliverer from an awful doom.

It was with the full blessing of wise and benignant Mother Church, and in the church of their own parish, that Redmond and Annette were married.

Redmond is now a member of Parliament as well as a prominent member of the Irish bar. Why do I mention this? Ah! ladies, for your sake. I know you have a charming curiosity. Here is a clue. Find out who Redmond is!

* The main incidents of this story actually occurred.

A GHOST STORY OF THE REVOLUTION.

WE have not many haunted spots now in our Empire State, or even in America, and very few genuine goblin stories, such as once upon a time, told by the fireside, made one afraid to look behind him; delightful old tales, implicitly believed in by narrator and listeners, and casting over all a shadow of utter and indefinable terror! Not that ghosts have ceased to come, but they are things of course now, and their position with regard to mortals in the flesh is entirely changed; the territory of spirit-land (at least a part of it) has been annexed, we may say, to our free and independent thirty-seven states; a regular intercourse has been opened; and, as the intangible parties in the compact have frequent and passing invitations to make earthly visits at certain specified periods, it is no more than civil in them to wait until they are expected.

Now, in years gone by it was quite otherwise; so far from being invited, they were universally shunned; man, woman, and child fled at the slightest indication of their presence; and as for speech, it was next to impossible for them to put in a single word before the terror-stricken mortal had speeded away, far beyond all hearing. Not much seemed the gain to either side by those interviews; occasionally some rogue was known to disgorge his ill-gotten pelf in consequence of the midnight apparitions of some phantom things, a warning to him to mend his ways; or some timid heart perhaps grew faint, and before long time ceased to beat, under the idea that it had received a supernatural summons to the unseen

world; but generally speaking, the shock of an intense and overpowering affright was about all that accrued to the sight-seer from the meeting—a terror so genuine that he was able to impart it to many a circle of eager listeners for an incredibly long period after the adventure.

But what attraction has modern America for sprites, spooks, brownies, fairies, and all that dainty ethereal tribe that may be met in the Old World? Or what, for the more solemn shadows that haunt dilapidated galleries, in the tumble-down ruins of ancient transatlantic castles? What homes have we for "elves and little people," that dance for years, yes for centuries, on the same greensward in the Highlands of Scotland? Alas! in an incredibly short period grass here gives place to wheat-fields, and fairy rings would be disrespectfully ploughed up and planted. Let any sociable *brownie* plan a visit to old friends, she would probably find the whole family, bag and baggage, moved off to the far West, and only strangers round the hearth-stone. They love things old, and here all is new and cheerful under the tireless march of improvement. We have no black forest, no

"Casted crag of Drachenfels,"

but the primitive woodland yet clothes the mountain that "frowns o'er the wide and winding" river.

The nearest approach to a haunted castle is to be seen sometimes in travelling over the Western States. There, in some lonely inconvenient spot which no prudent man would have chosen for a homestead, an unfinished,

overgrown, weakly-looking wooden house tells its story, not of greatness gone by, but of greatness planned and never accomplished—a pitiful comment on the uncertainty of human affairs! It happens thus: Some settler, sadly miscalculating his resources, projects a palace in the wilderness on a scale of city splendor; that is, with parlor, dining-room, kitchen, bedrooms, and the little elegances of pantries and closets. The sides are enclosed, the roof is on, and the revenues he counted on as certain are not forthcoming. Then do papered walls and panelled doors with brass knobs, and visions of portico and piazza, all float away to the blue clouds; the hapless dreamer fits up one corner room for the reception of his whole household until he can find another *location*, and take a new start in the search after fortune, and so abandons his rickety palace to the lord of the soil. As the boards blacken in wind and storm, and one end blows down perhaps in some rough northwester, it gains the name of being haunted; and to ride past such a skeleton thing by moonlight or in the dim twilight, with the utter desolation of all around, and the yawning blackness of cavities which should have been doors and windows, it requires no great stretch of imagination to picture an unearthly head peeping out here and there. Very bold yeomen are known to always whip their horses to a full gallop as they approach and pass the fearful spot; and as for women and children, under that strange fascination by which the supernatural repels and yet attracts, they always gaze intently, and as surely "see something"!

Although goblin visits in our land are just now rather on the decline (except in a regular business way), there was a time when strange sights were seen and strange things happened; and,

although it may seem almost incredible, it is a fact well established in history that it was generally to the Dutch settled here, to that clear-headed, reasoning nation, so little likely to be deceived on any subject, that most of these revelations were made.

This certainly ensures for the tales the firm belief of all mankind. When an imaginative Hibernian or a lively, light-hearted Gaul announces a vision, it must be taken with some little allowance for flights of fancy, etc., etc.; but when a phlegmatic, cool-headed Hollander declares he has seen a *spook*, you may believe as if it was your own eyes.

For the precise period most prolific in signs, sights, and dreams, we must go back to the early days of our state, yet not to the *first* settlers. Their troubles, so numerous that it is scarcely possible to number them, had their origin in things tangible; and so closely did these troubles press daily on all sides, that the thoughts of the first colonists were entirely engrossed by the things of earth. To such a point did this downward tendency reach, that they seemed at times in danger of relapsing into heathendom, as may be seen from the reports sent back to Amsterdam, and yet extant among colonial papers, that they possessed neither school-houses nor churches. They did possess, however, three unsailing sources of annoyances and danger—an Indian warfare, neighbors on their eastern boundary of unparalleled audacity, and domestic bickerings in the perpetual strife kept up between Manhattan and Rensselaerwyck.

What might have happened if the Indians had been treated with common justice and honesty can be now only conjecture; but their wrongs began at the beginning. It is a dark

spot on the glories of the adventurous little yacht *Half-Moon* that her very first track through the waters of the magnificent Cahohatéa (now the Hudson) was marked with their blood, causelessly and wantonly shed.

Hendrik Hudson and his crew landed, we are told, on the western bank of the great bay, which was lined with "men, women, and children, by whom they were kindly received, and presented with tobacco and dried currants."* A little further on were "very loving people and very old men, by whom the Europeans were well used." They brought in their canoes to the voyagers all sorts of fruit and game, and on one occasion of a visit made by white men to the shore they broke their arrows and threw them in the fire to express their pacific intentions. Yet despite all this, when the vessel had advanced only a few miles, one of her crew fired and killed an Indian, without the least warning, for attempting to steal a pillow and some old garments.† No satisfaction was offered to the terrified savages, and they pushed off for the shore in their canoes, but they vowed a vengeance, and they kept the vow; so that, when some few years later one ship after another brought the enterprising individuals who first unpacked their household utensils and farm tools in the New World, they entered upon a stormy existence already prepared for them. It was not a glimpse of wraith or goblin that people feared to encounter in the lonely by-path, but the stealthy tread and dark visage of some lurking savage, ever watchful and merciless, ever close at hand when least expected. How often in the silent night, in how many little hamlets, in how many solitary huts, women and children

listened in speechless terror to the war-whoop, that fearful yell, and were made to feel Indian retaliation for the evil doings of fathers and husbands! Small time had they for ghostly fears. When the savages fled before European firearms, it was only to return. More than two thousand of them appeared in their canoes at one time before the little block-house at Manhattan, because Hendrik von Dyke, with an imprudence and wickedness perfectly disgraceful in a mynheer, had killed a squaw for stealing apples in his orchard. His orchard was on the present site of Rector Street.

But, though the Dutch colonists were generally at fault in provoking contention, they were also valiant, after some preparation, to meet it. When Claes Smit was ruthlessly murdered by the natives, some time about 1642, and they refused either to give up or punish his murderer because he had fled and could not be found, the colonists consented to march to battle,

"provided the director himself (Von Kieft) accompanied them to prevent disorder, also that he furnish, in addition to powder and ball, provision necessary for the expedition, such as *bread and butter*, and appoint a steward to take charge of the same, so that all waste be prevented."

"If any person require anything more than this *bread and butter*, he to provide himself therewith."*

Finally, however, gunpowder prevailed; and the aborigines retreated to forests beyond the reach of the *pale-faces*; schoolmasters and ministers had been sent over from Holland, and the inhabitants of Manhattan Island, as well as the other little settlements up the river, began to live a

* O'Callaghan, *Hist. New Neths.*, vol. i. p. 37.

† *Ibid.* vol. i. ch. 2.

* O'Callaghan, *Hist.* vol. i. bk. iii. ch. 2.

more spiritual life, and to gather around them by degrees all that troop of unearthly beings well-known in the other country. Little children were encouraged to be good and expect Santa Klaus, and bad ones were no longer frightened into propriety with the threat of being devoured by some hideous Waran-ancongyn with tomahawk and scalping-knife.

One of the spots first renowned for ghostly adventures was a pleasant little valleylike place, on the northern limits of the town, called Medge Padje (now Maiden Lane), where a clear stream ran between grassy banks, so gentle and noiseless that it carried the gazer's heart back —far back over the ocean to the canals of Faderlandt, and was a perfect relief from the lashing waves of the great North River. Hither, on pleasant summer afternoons, many a gude vrow would turn her steps with her troop of sturdy urchins, and, work in hand, knitting, knitting, all the way. But they were always careful to return before dark; for such fearful tales had been told, principally of a tall woman in white who always vanished in the direction of Golden Hill (now John Street), that no one cared to make her acquaintance.

Long years after this, when the palisades marking the extent of the city had been removed as far north as what is now Warren Street, and a field of barley flourished on the Heerewegh (now Broadway), somewhat about the present City Hall, we again hear of the same apparition. The Rev. John Kimball, passing along the little stream rather late at night, heard steps, and, looking behind him, saw the spectre; of course he fled. Doubtless she was the bearer of some important message from the spirit-land which she was anxious to communicate, but, as no one ever stop-

ped to listen, what it was can now never be known.

Mr. Watson, in his *Annals of New York*, relates a story given by a military gentleman of his own encounter with an apparition in that same place. The captain declares, and doubtless believed, that he bravely attacked it, and discovered only a mischievous mortal in disguise; but it is hardly probable that any mortal in his senses would be personating a ghost at midnight on haunted ground, so that the tale, being rather one-sided evidence, is doubtful.

Another solitary place was Windmill Lane,* which led from Broadway between Cortlandt and Liberty Streets down quite a steep hill, in a northwest direction, to the river edge, where stood a windmill. There was a time when this lane was the most northern street in the settlement; then house after house began to be built around the old mill, and the city crept up gradually in that direction. Among those who made their homes there was a French lady, Madame Blons-peaux, who had crossed the ocean to teach the rising generation all she knew—French and embroidery. Two paths led to her establishment, one through the Lane, the other through a wheatfield, where now is St. Paul's church, and both were beset with spectres. Alas for the scholar kept in after the others were dismissed! Lightly did the offended majesty of madame weigh in the balance compared to what might possibly beleague the path homeward. There was a legend of a tall Indian who was always digging about for his bow and arrows, and a little short Dutchman about a foot high in breeches and cocked hat, who, the moment he found them, sprang into

* Watson's *Annals of New York*.

sight from somewhere and kicked the dirt over them, and the Indian began his search again!*

But the section of country most famous for spectral manifestations was the region about the Kaatskill Mountains. Darkly wooded glens, and lonely streams, and deep ravines offered the most ample facilities for all kinds of signs and wonders. Indeed, the Dutch settlers that dwelt in that by-place of existence, on the little cleared spots that here and there dotted the landscape, were so quiet and orderly, so far removed from the commotions that agitated the river colonies, no wonder ethereal beings found their companionship most congenial. These settlers had removed thither originally from the neighborhood of Fort Orange, and principally, nay, I may say solely, in disgust at the general uproar and discomfort which invested everything in proximity to that fort, under the joint dominion of the Patroon of Rensselaerwyck (or his agent), who resided there, and Director-General Petrus Stuyvesant, who fulminated his bulls from the south end of the Hudson; the contemporary edicts of the rival parties being always diametrically opposed to each other.

The truth is that, from the moment Director Stuyvesant landed at Manhattan, appointed there by the States-General of the United Netherlands, he had carried matters with such a high hand that everything succumbed before him. The boldest spirits bent to his rule, and (to continue the metaphor) he walked over them. His word was law without reason or explanation. He had even been known to shorten a troublesome state audience by tearing up the documents and dismissing the deputation.

Thus ruled the governor at Manhattan; but when Brant Arent Van Slechtenhorst was sent over from Holland as agent for the heir of the last patroon—Johannes Van Rensselaer, a minor—Petrus Stuyvesant met his match. Commander Slechtenhorst was in popular estimation “a person of stubborn and headstrong temper.”*

When Stuyvesant directed Carl von Brugge to quarry stone and cut wood for repairs on Fort Orange, nearly destroyed by a freshet, Brant dared the deputy to touch stone or stick at his peril, either for fortification or firewood; for the trees, root and branch, all belonged to his employer the patroon! He further forbade any of the inhabitants to aid them with horses, etc., while at the same time he was building a house himself not a pistol-shot from the fort. The news being carried to Manhattan, the director sent some soldiers to demolish the offending house now being built, and arrest the offender. This was more easily ordered than accomplished, so the soldiers held a parley with him, and were cautioned, among other bits of good advice, to take warning by one Jacob Jansen, who had not long before cut two fir-trees—eight days after he was seized with his plunder on the river by the patroon's officer, and duly punished! with the stunning point to the climax: “Can't he do so now?” All this being duly reported to the great director at Manhattan, it was deemed best to seek supplies beyond the domain of Rensselaerwyck, “stones from the mountains, rocks, and plains—timber from anywhere within the limits of New Netherlands—to have a wagon made, and take the horses of Jonas Bronck, who

* The writer of this possesses two pieces of embroidery done by one of madame's pupils.

* O'Callaghan, *Hist.*, vol. ii. p. 72.

was in debt to the company," and whose opinions on the subject were of course of no consequence. As for pulling down the house recently erected, Herr Van Slechtenhorst pointed to the fact that Fort Orange stood on the very soil of his employer, and that it was his intention at some leisure day to annihilate it. So went matters, until at last, when Stuyvesant ordered a solemn fast, and Van Slechtenhorst absolved all in his latitude from obedience, human patience could stand it no longer, and the insulted autocrat rushed to Albany in the swiftest sailing sloop that could be found; there, as has been said, to meet his match.

But our business is not with these belligerents, but with those peacefully disposed burghers, who had grown tired more and more, year after year, with this turmoil, which seemed now to have reached its height. Armed soldiers were in their midst (for seven had been sent up from Manhattan), and when the talk was of razing houses, why, even the neighboring Indians came crowding in to ask what the *Swannekins* were about.

Happily another home opened to them, and very many packed up all their worldly goods and migrated. This home was the region about the Kaatskill. One part of the mission of Herr Van Slechtenhorst when sent over the ocean was "to acquire by purchase the lands around Kaatskill for the greater security of the colony, as they were forming companies to remove thither." *

On the land thus obtained, they had nothing to fear from Indian opposition, and the kind of domestic life they coveted is pictured in a lease yet extant in the Van Rensselaer family, dated 1651, wherein the tenant binds himself to "read

a sermon or portion of Scripture every Sunday and festival to the neighboring Christians, and to sing hymns before and after prayer, after the custom of the Church of Holland." Years in that little nook of creation brought few great changes; their habitations had come to be grouped together somewhat town fashion, and were dignified by a name much too long, and unpronounceable except by a Dutch tongue, but well loved because traceable to Holland; and there life after life passed away like great waves in a stream—one disappears and another takes its place.

Such were the mortal inhabitants of the place; but the invisible portion of the community—their name was Legion! It seemed the very place of refuge for all sorts of bodiless personages who had been insulted and expelled from other places; indeed, if a census had been taken, according to the old wives' stories, their aggregate numbers would have made up near half the population of the village.

In one portion of the spot which might truly have been called the supernatural reservation was a deep ravine, which bore traces of having once been the bed of a mountain stream. At this period (some time before the old French war), its sole inhabitants were a morose, ill-looking woodman and his aged mother, and their dwelling-place was a miserable hut perched on rocks, and so hidden by gnarled and twisted trees and a dense undergrowth of shrubs as to be almost invisible to any but its occupants. Why they established themselves in that uninviting place, or what were the events of their lives previous to their appearance there, their unintelligible English failed to communicate, nor was there aught in the sullen taciturnity of both of them

* O'Callaghan, *Hist.*, vol. II. ch. iv.

in the presence of a stranger, or in the loud and fearful bickerings heard oftentimes in their hovel by the passer-by, that created a desire to fathom the mystery. When the news arrived that French and English had met, the outcasts in the glen, strange to say were the only ones in the settlement whose fortunes seemed in any way to be affected by it. Their disputes were heard louder and more frequent than ever before, to end, alas! in a tragedy. The man, tired perhaps of his monotonous existence, and hoping also to better his fortunes, was desirous of joining the ranks of war, yet, feeling at the same time the necessity of his support to his old mother, he strove to wring from her a consent to his departure. It was sought in vain. The aged woman, to her consciousness of utter helplessness, added doubtless a natural desire for his safety, and consent was withheld. Opposition goaded him, and in a moment of passion he struck her lifeless to the ground.

The miserable parricide fled, and the hut fell in ruins. Time passed on, the war was ended, and peace restored.

And now, when the tragedy of the glen had grown to be an old story, only told by a winter evening's fire, it began to be whispered—and it fairly petrified the senses of every hearer—that Dark Rob, as he was called, or his spectre, had returned to his old abode!

No one cared to investigate the matter very closely. A light was certainly seen flickering in the ruined hovel, and a phantom-like thing in human shape glided about the spot. No mortal would choose to remain there alone, so it must be the shade of Dark Rob, on the theatre of his unnatural crime!

Many an evil deed was related of him in this, his second sojourn in the

hut; but one of the most evil, because passing all comprehension, was the strange influence he contrived to acquire by ways unknown over a sturdy farmer named Jansen Van Dorp. How they first met was perfectly inexplicable; for goblin Rob had never been visible in any of the ordinary paths of the settlement, and, although Jans was one of the very few who laughed to scorn the idea of a ghost, he would scarcely venture in his sober senses to penetrate the dark shadows of the haunted hovel uninvited. In whatever way it happened, events proved their close intimacy; his steps were watched, and traced night after night to the hut, where they held their unholy orgies.

As a matter of course, the worldly affairs of Jans Van Dorp became disjointed things. His vrow had always borne a close resemblance to the helpmate of Socrates, and it is not to be supposed that such doings on the part of her truant spouse added to her sweetness of temper.

The most irritating part was the sudden taciturn spirit which seemed to possess the mynheer. Taunts, sneers, questions, reproaches, all were in vain! This was both new and alarming, because on no previous occasion had he ever been backward in contributing his share to the Babel din of their wordy skirmishes. It confirmed, alas! her worst suspicions, namely, that he was in toils and snares beyond all mortal power of extrication.

Great light was thrown on the affair by a shrewd neighbor, Effie Demson, who, having migrated to America from the Highlands of Scotland (and by some odd chance wandered down to the Kaatskill), was allowed to be especially versed in hobgoblin ethics. She affirmed that she had often heard from reliable authority that, whenever a

mortal is admitted to the society of spirits, an oath of secrecy is imposed under a penalty few would care to brave. She cited the cases of several imprudent individuals who, having violated this compact, suffered fearful consequences. One was Alice Pearson, of Byrehill, somewhere about 1588. Having been introduced to the invisible world by a friend, and joined them in "piping, mirth, and good cheer" (to use her own words), she was warned that, if she ever related what she had seen, "she should be martyred." One day, when she began to speak of these things, an unseen blow took away her breath and left an ugly mark on her side; heedless of the warning, Alice continued her revelations until she was burned as a witch, thus fulfilling her doom.* Every one in the Highlands knew, too, the terrible visitation that had lighted on one kirk for having pried into secrets merely to publish them. Every one knew that he was a mere wandering gypsy in the universe, and would be to the end of time.

Effie generally concluded her oracles with the remnant of an old song, written about fairies particularly, but equally applicable to any unearthlies. It was called

"*God a Mercy Will*

"To be sung or whistled to the tune of *Meadow Brow* by the learned; by the unlearned, to the tune of *Fortune*.

"A tell-tale in their companie
They never could endure,
But whoso kept not secrecy
Their deed was punished sure.
It was a just and Christian deed
To pinch such black and blue."
Etc., etc., etc.

Poetica Stromata.

As this bore the antique date of 1648, and was written by Corbet,

* *Trials from the Criminal Records of Scotland.* By R. Pitcairn, Esq.

Bishop of Norwich, it was considered good authority for anything.

This, then, explained the unusual silence of Jans Van Dorp, and it also half-reconciled his gude vrow to endure her unsatisfied curiosity. To wonder and to be afflicted night after night by his truant absence was bad enough, but to have seen him vanish in blue smoke would have been worse.

Things were passing thus in that sequestered little spot, while the great world without was agitated with mightier events—the opening scenes of the Revolutionary war. It is doubtful whether the faint rumors of it which penetrated the seclusion there would have excited the least attention, except for the fact that it was the only earthly topic on which Jans Van Dorp nowadays manifested the least interest. Every Dutch villager, whose business led him to the great cities, was questioned and cross-questioned on his return as to the precise state of things, with a minuteness which would have done honor to that renowned lawyer Heer Adrian Van der Donck, the first who landed in the New Netherlands. The one little gray newspaper that arrived weekly, and had hitherto circulated among his neighbors until it was quite illegible, was now packed immediately in his great-coat pocket and taken to his ghostly partner. All this was a perfect labyrinth of mystery, and furnished texts for many a sage conjecture and dubious shake of the head. Some hinted that Jans Van Dorp might mean to put in execution the threat he had been so often heard to hurl at his irritating helpmate when her vexatious volatility exceeded all bounds of endurance—that he'd be off to some war. But time puts an end to all things, although it does not always explain things to universal satisfaction. What

Jans or the goblin thought or meant can never be fathomed, but some things are matters of history; and it is a testified fact that the very moment this little dingy newspaper brought tidings that the first cannons of battle had boomed, Jansen Van Dorp started as if his doom was somehow connected with it. It was a night, dark and stormy, but he seized his hat, and rushed from the cheerful glow of his own home to the pitchy darkness without, and they whispered he was bound to the haunted hovel! Too probable, for from that hour neither Jans nor spectre was ever seen there more.

It should rather be said, never seen as mortal *could* be seen, for by many he was still considered an inhabitant of the settlement, although lost for ever to his hapless vrow. He had visited her in dreams, and warned her of something she could not exactly remember, but very terrible, and given on these occasions such

diverse accounts of himself, it was hard to tell what to believe. To Effie he had frequently presented himself. She had seen him in the coffee dregs, in leaves at the bottom of her tea-cup, in a mirror which she had cut triangular for that express purpose, and, finally, in a tremendous thunder-storm, standing close beside her.

As he gave no sign on these occasions, her charitable conclusion was that he had nothing very good to relate of himself.

Many months after this, one of the most intelligent mynheers of the settlement, having been called by business to a far eastern city, declared on his return that, among a troop of soldiers marching to the frontiers, he had recognized Jans Van Dorp and Dark Rob; but, as he failed in speaking to them, his assertion passed for nothing, and his story was dismissed as mere moonshine, too absurd to be believed.

A LESSON OF LIFE.

A LITTLE girl was waiting alone in her nursery for the arrival of a new governess. Being of a restless turn, and feeling the occasion to be one of great importance, she had manifested her anxiety and impatience by wandering from window to window, flattening her nose against each successive pane, and staring wistfully out at the bare, smooth lawn and at the great trees shaking down their last few raindrops as they shivered in the cold March wind. She was a pretty child of an unusual type, with a skin of milky whiteness, gray eyes so dark and deeply set that they passed at first sight for black, and an abundant crop of short, fair curls. Tired of the dismal prospect out of doors, she had sauntered again to the hearth, and was idly gazing at the smouldering logs, when the door opened and a tall girl with brown hair and bright, brown eyes stood smiling on the threshold.

"She has come, Essie," she said, "and father has sent for you."

"O Lesley!" And the child sprang hastily forward and caught her sister's frock. "Is she nice? Do you like her looks?"

"She is lovely," was the assured reply; "and you cannot fail to like her, unless you are an obstinate little monkey. But come along; they are waiting for you now."

Essie ran down-stairs and across the hall, then, seized with a sudden fit of shyness, stood hesitating at the library door, until her companion, as though fearing she might slip away altogether, took her arm and pushed her gently in.

"This is my little sister, Miss Grantly," she said briefly, as a

* " De sabens *Francimans*
La coudannon a mort dezunpey tressens ans."
—*Las Papillotas de Jasmin.*

young girl dressed in black rose from the sofa and came forward to meet them. "And unless she is going to learn a great deal more quickly for you than she ever did for me, you will have good cause to possess your soul in patience."

Miss Grantly colored, and laughed a little, low, musical laugh. If not absolutely lovely, as Lesley had pronounced her to be, she was certainly very pretty, with a delicate, babyish face, and an appealing look in her clear blue eyes that had won its way into many an unguarded heart. She sat down now and drew Essie to her side, holding the passive little hand and smiling at the sober, up-turned face.

"I am not easily frightened," she whispered, "and I don't feel a bit discouraged by what your sister says. She has no idea what a student you are going to make by and by."

She spoke lightly and with a caressing grace that seemed irresistible, but there was no response from the silent figure by her side. The child's gray eyes wandered slowly for a moment over the charming face before her, and then drooped in sullen coldness, while two small, perpendicular wrinkles dented her smooth, white forehead. The signs were plainly visible to all who chose to read them, and they said, as distinctly as words could speak, that Miss Essie's first impressions had not been favorable. Even Miss Grantly seemed conscious of this, and drew back a little, looking hurt and puzzled, while Lesley tapped her foot impatiently as she glanced at her father's darkening face.

"Essie," he said sharply, "when you have shaken hands with Miss Grantly, and have shown her that you are not absolutely without manners, you may take her up to her room. Lesley, ring for a servant to carry the wraps, and let us have lunch directly."

He spoke with manifest annoyance, and his orders were quickly obeyed. Alone with his older daughter, who stood looking absently out at the rain-washed path, he pushed aside the book he had been reading, and sat for a few moments absorbed in thoughts that were evidently not of a pleasant nature. "Lesley," he said suddenly, "it is very strange that you cannot teach Essie to be more courteous."

The girl turned slowly and shrugged her pretty shoulders. She was well accustomed to have all her little sister's misdeeds charged to her account, and yet the process never failed to nettle her afresh. "How can I help it, father?" she said. "Essie's whims are far beyond me, but I never dreamed she would be so rude to-day."

"Rude to-day! But why should she ever be permitted to be rude at all? I am sure you were never brought up to suppose that you had the option of being polite or not, as you felt inclined."

Lesley laughed. "No, I was not," she frankly admitted. "But then Essie is a very different child, and has more ideas and opinions of her own than I was ever allowed to indulge in. Look at her chosen friends! She is hand-and-glove with every old woman and bare-footed boy in the village, and half the time I cannot keep her away from the very servants."

The frown on Dr. Stanhope's face deepened into a curious look of mingled fear and anger. "Do you mean to say that you permit Essie to associate with these people?" he asked. "If so, her manners need no longer be a source of wonder."

"Permit it? No! But sometimes I cannot help it."

"But you must help it in the future! Do you understand me, Lesley? You must absolutely forbid Essie to have anything to do with the servants or with the village children, and punish her every time she disobeys you. I will not have it in your power to say that your sister gratifies a taste for low company, which you should have checked in the start."

Lesley flushed crimson. The implied reproach was almost more than she could bear. Why, after all; should her father's annoyance with Essie always take the form of covert anger against herself? She felt distinctly the injustice of her own position, but offered no remonstrance to it. If she had gained nothing else in her guarded and disciplined childhood, she had at least learned how to be silent under provocation; and this power of self-restraint gave a strength and dignity even to the simplicity of her youth and inexperience. No one recognized that fact more clearly, or suffered from it more frequently, than her father. He felt now, as he had often felt before, that he had been unfair to her, and he knew that she would give him no opportunity either to make good his words or to revoke them. Under which discouraging circumstances he fidgeted for a moment or two and then went back to his book, out of humor with both his daughters and with himself as well, yet able to take a half-comic view of his own discomfiture. "She is a true disciple of Pallas Athene," he muttered ruefully when he was left alone. "And vast are thy powers, O Silence!"

But Lesley took no pleasure in her triumph. Indeed, she did not even know that she had triumphed, as she lingered in the hall, looking moodily through the stained-glass window which

lent a false brightness to the dreary world outside. She was but twenty-two, and had known very little of the cares or tumults of life, yet was far from thinking so. If any one had said to her that

“ Her soul was a fair, desert temple of beauty,
Unshaded by sorrow, unhallowed by duty,”

she would have offered an indignant denial and pointed out the greatness of the mistake.

Had it not been a sorrow when her own mother died, leaving her a very little girl to the care of aunts who loved her too well—so they said—to make her childhood anything but a burden? Had not that sorrow been keener still when these same relatives came in solemn state to the boarding-school where their twelve-year-old niece was struggling with fractions and the French grammar, and informed her, with a strong implied disapproval of the act, that her father had taken another wife? And when at last she was released from school, and sent with a trusty body-guard of maid and courier to join her parent abroad, was it not to find him a broken-hearted widower, with a foreign-looking and atrociously-dressed child of five, who could not speak a word of English, and to whom she, Lesley, was expected to fill the part of a mother? And was it not an ever-present sorrow that this child, brusque, wilful, and old-fashioned, should be so much dearer to his heart than she had ever been? Yes, Lesley felt that she had many trials, and sometimes wondered that she was not more melancholy over them. While as for duty—surely she had tried to do her duty loyally, both to the father whom she dearly loved and to the little sister whom she had never learned to love at all. On that score, at least, she was free from self-reproach.

And Essie was devoted to her with childish and unexacting ardor; but then it was not difficult for Essie to love any one. Lesley's affections were few and of a slow growth, but Essie's heart was capable of taking in all by whom she was surrounded. She loved her father and her half-sister best of all; but she loved, too, her old nurse, who told her stories without end; and the cook, who saved for her benefit the most tempting of cakes and tarts; and the gardener, who would stop on his busiest days to carry water for her drooping flowers; and the groom, who liked nothing better than to canter alongside of her little pony; and the village children—those hurtful associates—who worshipped with one accord the very ground she trod on. Certainly Essie's

affections were many and warmly repaid, which made it all the more irritating that she should have taken an unreasonable dislike to a governess who was, in Lesley's opinion, charming. And this having brought her back to her original grievance, she stood pondering over it until a welcome and unexpected sight drove the recollection from her mind.

Up the muddy road came riding a young man on a chestnut mare, and in a moment the girl had flung open the door and stood waiting on the porch, her eyes sparkling, her hair blown about by the damp wind which brought a freshened color into her cheeks. The rider dismounted, ran up the steps, and took her into his arms with more of the matter-of-fact cordiality of a husband than the eager devotion of a lover. "Why, what were you doing at the front door," he asked, "looking as irresistible as Circe at her palace gates?"

Lesley shook her head. At this moment all her trials had vanished, and she was ready to wonder how she could ever have fretted over them. "I believe," she said hesitatingly, "that I was moping a little before I caught sight of you."

"Moping! What about? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Oh! no, nothing wrong. Only Essie chose to be rude to her new governess, and father, as usual, discovered that I was to blame, and I felt inclined to be cross over the whole matter."

The young man laughed and drew her a little closer. "My dear child," he said, "if you are destined to shoulder all Essie's misdeeds your burden is likely to be a heavy one. And as for being rude to her governess, you surely can't expect a youngster to like her governess, can you? I used to have one myself when I was a little boy, and I have a very distinct recollection of being rude to her nearly all the time, and of being perpetually sent to bed in consequence—which is more than will ever happen to Essie. But, to come down to practical matters, I hope that I am in time for luncheon, for I feel myself trembling on the very brink of starvation. In two minutes, you say? Then I will ride Jess to the stable, and be back with you in two minutes at the furthest."

He was gone, and Lesley's mind was at peace with herself and with all around her. She had only been engaged for three months, and love still seemed to her a panacea for all the ills that flesh is heir to. What were a few vexations, more or less, when into her life had come this great happiness? What did anything matter, after all, when she could fall back upon this hidden spring of joy? By the time Mr. John Burroughs had given his mare in

charge of a groom and had returned to the house Lesley had tacitly made peace with her father, had said a few politely apologetic words to Miss Grantly, and had abstained from scolding Essie—three very distinct results of that short and stolen interview in the hall.

However inauspiciously the new governess had begun her reign, it continued without any of those tragic instances which had made the pastime of Jack Burroughs' infancy. Dr. Stanhope was warm in her praise; Lesley, with true womanly sympathy for her early orphanhood and her dependent condition, endeavored to surround her with little pleasures and to make her life as bearable as she could; and Essie, if her dislike remained unaltered, had been cajoled or threatened into a state of passive civility. Indeed, Miss Grantly possessed that rare tact which would have made good her footing wherever chance had thrown her; and far more potent than her youth or beauty was the subtle consciousness of people's minds and moods, which intuitively enabled her to please. She understood when to speak and when to let her appealing eyes speak for her with a mute and irresistible eloquence. She was incapable of jarring upon the vanities and weaknesses of those around her; and while carefully refraining from open flattery—that rock upon which so many vessels split—she had learned from Shenstone the important lesson that “*deference is the most complicate, the most indirect, and the most elegant of all compliments.*” Accordingly she had taught herself to veil her natural self-reliance, to ask for advice in all emergencies, to listen to it with grateful attention, and even to make a feint of following it. She permitted Dr. Stanhope to feel that he was her wisest counsellor, Lesley to think that she was her kindest friend, Jack Burroughs to suppose that his occasional attentions both flattered and fluttered her—which was far from being the case—and every servant in the house to believe that he or she ministered in an especial manner to her wants.

On her little pupil alone was all this tact and judgment thrown away; for Essie, not clever enough herself to appreciate cleverness in other people, trusted entirely to her instincts, and was as unreasonable in her fancies as the terrier that barks at one guest and fawns upon another, with more innate penetration, perhaps, than we are apt to give him credit for. The child's truthful soul looked through her clear gray eyes, and in her simple directness there was something which her father thought half-barbarous, but which Lesley, single-minded herself, was

quick to understand and appreciate. Nor can it be claimed, indeed, that her studies advanced as rapidly as Miss Grantly had predicted; but then book-learning was not at all in Essie's line. She was quick to remember all she heard, quick to draw inferences from all she saw, but hopelessly slow in extracting any information out of a printed page. To Lesley, looking back upon her own early efforts, Essie's stupidity seemed almost incomprehensible. Why, at nine years old she was studying books whose titles her sister could barely spell, and of whose contents she was likely to be long in happy ignorance. "She is either hopelessly lazy or a little idiot!" pronounced Lesley with decision, and Miss Grantly merely shrugged her shoulders and smiled her softest smile. It was exactly her own opinion, but she hesitated about giving it utterance.

By this time spring was over and June had put forth her bravest array of flowers. The outside world was so very fair in Essie's eyes that the hours in the school-room seemed longer than ever, with a hundred voices from the fields and woods calling her to come out and be happy in their midst. Her thoughts wandered from the intricacies of the first reader, or the hideous complications of a written sum, down to the orchard where the birds were singing, untaught and consequently untroubled; or to the mill-stream beyond, where the lazy little fishes darted hither and thither, with no definite aim to mar their tranquil enjoyment. Essie often wished that she was a bird, or a fish, or anything that was not expected to know the multiplication-table or to write its own name. She envied Lesley, who was done with all this weariness and could ride out for hours with Jack Burroughs by her side. And perhaps Miss Grantly, looking through the school-room window and seeing the pair canter gaily down the winding path, envied them a little, too, and comforted herself with the thought that all things come in time to those who know how to wait. It was certainly pleasanter to ride through the fresh June morning than to sit cooped up in a quiet room trying to teach a stupid child; and perhaps it was because the day was so fine and their hearts so light that the two young people were tempted to prolong their ride far beyond its usual limits. In consequence of which Mr. Burroughs discovered when nearly home that he had scant time to keep an engagement of some importance, and said good-by to Lesley in the shady lane leading to her father's gate.

Left alone, the girl suffered her horse to walk, while she sat lost in a maze of happy memories. It was very quiet, for "noon

lay heavy on flower and tree," and through the net-work of leaves overhead the sunbeams wrought out shifting patterns of gold along the dusty road. Lesley never forgot those few moments, when the stillness around answered to the hush within herself; for it seemed as the turning-point of her whole life, and marked her last hours of unbroken happiness. As she drew near the lodge she became dreamily aware that an old man was plodding on before her in the dust, and that he stopped now and waited for her to come up—a poor old man, shabby and travel-stained, from his limp and greasy hat down to his boots worn into gaping holes. He mopped his forehead with a rag of a handkerchief, and peered with dull blue eyes into Lesley's face.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he said slowly, "but I'm thinking that it's somewhere near here that Mr. Herbert Stanhope lives?"

"My father, Dr. Stanhope, do you mean?" she answered, somewhat surprised. "He lives just at the end of the lane. You will be there in a minute."

"Your father!" repeated the old man, with a vaguely bewildered air. "And you are Dr. Stanhope's daughter! But he has another little one besides?"

"Yes," said Lesley shortly, resenting the question as impertinent, but softening in spite of herself at the wearied, puzzled face turned to her own. "Here is the lodge, and you can come right in. Do you want to see my father especially, or would you like to go around to the kitchen and have your dinner?"—half-suspecting that he was a beggar, and pitying his too evident poverty.

"Dinner! And is it I who would eat food under his roof?" returned her companion, waking for an instant into the semblance of life, and then relapsing into his former apathy. "No, no; it's no dinner I want, but to see Dr. Stanhope himself; and may be you'll take me to him?"

"Yes, I will," said Lesley, jumping off her horse and running lightly up the steps, her pliant figure and clear-cut features contrasting sharply with the dilapidated ruin by her side. "Come!" as the door was opened, and, leading him directly to the library, she pushed aside the curtain and looked in. "Father," she said softly, "here is an old man whom I met on the road and who wants to see you particularly."

Dr. Stanhope put down his newspaper with a resigned air and turned carelessly around; then sprang to his feet and angrily confronted the intruder. "Halleran!" he gasped, and Lesley

saw that he was white to the lips, and that the chair he leant on shook under his nervous grasp.

"Yes, it's I, Edward Halleran," returned the stranger slowly, and never taking his eyes off the doctor's startled face. "And I've come many a long mile to ask what you have done with my daughter's child."

His daughter's child! Could it be that this miserable creature was Essie's grandfather? Lesley stood as if thunder-struck, but Dr. Stanhope never seemed to notice her presence. "What is that to you!" he said hoarsely. "Your daughter, my dear wife, died, as you are aware, in Algiers. How do you know that she ever left a child?"

"How do I know?" repeated the old man, his voice quavering with emotion, his dim eyes dimmer still with tears. "I know because I have her letter—the only one she ever wrote after you took her from me. You put half the world between us for fear we should disgrace you; but when her heart was breaking in a far-off country she remembered then that she had a father still."

If Dr. Stanhope had grown pale before he was ashen now, and his eyes burned with suppressed fury. "It is a lie!" he whispered. "I loved her with my whole soul, and at no time did I ever give her just cause to regret her marriage with me. If I separated her from her family and former associates it was for her happiness as well as for my own, and she consented to it as inevitable before she became my wife."

"Ay, that she did," said the unhappy father. "She loved you well enough to give up for your sake all that had been dear to her heart. But, more than father, or mother, or home, she abandoned for you her faith and her God; and that was the thought that weighed heavy on her dying soul. If I have hunted you out—and it's been weary work—it was not of my own will, but because I've been obeying my darling's last prayer."

He stopped and drew from his breast a torn, crumpled letter, which he unfolded with trembling fingers that were hardly equal to the task. Smoothing it out tenderly, he hesitated a minute, and then turned with instinctive trust to the girl by his side. "Will you read it to your father?" he said humbly. "I have never let it out of my hands before."

Lesley flushed scarlet and stepped a little forward. "Shall I do so, father?" she asked in a low voice, "or shall I go away?"

The pain she felt was manifested in look and tone, but Dr.

Stanhope had regained his ordinary composure and never seemed to notice it. "You have heard this much," he said dryly; "you may as well know all."

He sat down again by the table, leaning his head upon his hand, and permitted her to take the letter. It was worn, soiled, and almost illegible. The writing was weak and straggling like that of a child. It was ill-spelt and ill-constructed, but terribly real in its misery and pain. What a production for her father's wife! was Lesley's first thought, as she held it in her dainty fingers, and, standing in the deep enclosure of the window-place, began to read :

" DEAREST FATHER : I have been an ungrateful child to you, and God has punished me, and my punishment is more than I can bear. I gave up you, and my mother, and my faith to be a lady and have my husband love me ; and now I am dying before I have been married a year—dying in a dreadful country, where they said I should grow strong again, but where there is no one near me I can trust ; dying so far away from you, and so far away from heaven, without a priest for my own soul or to baptize my baby. And I am pretty still, and my husband loves me still, and yet I can never get well. Father, dear father, it is too late to help me now, but promise me you will help my baby. It is a little girl, and she is named Hester after me ; and some day please try and find her, and tell her I was a Catholic, and make her be baptized. She is mine, and I give her to you. Don't forget her as I forgot you, and don't ever let her know what a bad daughter I was.

" HESTER STANHOPE."

Poor, pleading letter ! Poor, weak soul, who, trembling at the doors of death, casts back even then a longing look upon the pleasures of a misspent life ! " I am pretty still, and my husband loves me still, and yet I can never get well." Forced to face eternity, only because earth was slipping fast from her feeble footsteps, the mother-love asserts itself even in this trivial spirit, and enables her to dimly realize for what she has bartered away her soul.

There was a long silence in the room after the letter had been read, for the three who had heard it were each absorbed in their own thoughts. Down Halleran's wrinkled face the tears were running like rain, and Lesley, as she watched him, felt a great pity rise in her heart for him, and for her father, and most of all for Essie. Poor Essie ! What wonder that she was brusque and hard to train ! What wonder that study was bitter and freedom sweet to one whose mother could not spell and whose grandfather was unable to read ! The prejudices of birth were very strong in Lesley's soul. She had been carefully and conscientious

tiously trained by her aunts to believe that she, whose great-grandfather came over from England rich and well-born, must necessarily be better than those whose ancestors arrived carrying their baggage in a handkerchief; and that the possession of a great-great-grandmother, in itself a rarity, was enhanced in her case by a much-diluted drop of noble German blood. Of her father's second wife she had been told nothing, save that she was an orphan without relatives; and had never given the matter a further thought, until now the whole truth was savagely thrust upon her.

There was a certain sense of justice in Lesley's mind, which forced her to realize that the old man standing crying by her side had been hardly treated, and that some sympathy and consideration were due to him; but her strongest feeling at this moment was one of fastidious disgust. There was something painfully real, and consequently unattractive, about Halleran's grief and poverty. He was not in the least like similar old men in books, picturesque in a rugged simplicity. He was merely ragged and unkempt, and far from clean. Dust and heat and tears had streaked his withered face with grimy marks, and the handkerchief with which he sought to smear them off made Lesley wince. He stood humbly, hat in hand, and with no pretence of equality in his son-in-law's use. He was broken in years, and health, and spirits; and to those who did not understand the hidden purpose which urged him on it would have seemed an easy matter to crush up his presumptuous interference. Perhaps Dr. Stanhope thought so as he sat wrapped in moody contemplation. He had loved this man's daughter with the strongest affections of his heart. Her beauty had tempted him to break down the barriers of caste, and it stung him sharply to know that in her trouble she had turned weakly away from him for help and sympathy; that not even in the end had she given him her trust and confidence; and that, having lavished all things on her, he had yet failed to make her happy. For Halleran to come seeking his grandchild was, in Dr. Stanhope's eyes, preposterous; and that his long-guarded secret should be shared by his older daughter was a bitter humiliation to his soul. He glanced up now and met her clear brown eyes fixed on him with a mute inquiry that roused him into speech.

"Give him back the letter, Lesley," he said wearily. "I did not know that it had ever been written, or I could have supplemented it with some further information. On one point, Halleran, you may set your mind at ease. Hester, two days before

she died, confessed to me her desire to see a priest, and I procured one for her. He was a French Jesuit in charge of a mission in Algiers, and he administered to her all the rites of her church and baptized her little girl. Are you contented now?"

The old man came forward a few hasty steps, peered anxiously into the other's face, and then drew a long breath, as if a heavy burden had been suddenly lifted from his soul. "Thank God!" he said simply, "and may he reward you!" Then, after a pause, he added, with sad humility, "I'll be going away now, if you wish it. It's enough for me to know that my child's child will be brought up in her mother's faith, and I'll not so much as ask to look in her pretty eyes."

Dr. Stanhope stirred impatiently in his chair and glanced again at Lesley, who was watching him with silent earnestness. "You mistake me entirely, Halleran," he said dryly. "I am no advocate of any especial sect, nor do I regard the selection of one as a matter of vital importance. I never actually opposed Hester in the practice of her religion, and I would not for worlds have denied her its consolations on her death-bed. Essie may join whatever church she pleases when she is old enough to decide with propriety; but I have no intention of educating her in your fantastic creed. Nor will I permit any interference in the matter. As for seeing her, you may do so, if you wish, on condition that you do not tell her who you are. I will send for her before you leave. And now one thing more—and, believe me, I do not want to be unkind. I fear that your circumstances are very poor, though they were not so when I first knew you. If this be the case I am ready and willing to make ample provision for you and your wife, for the sake of her who is gone; but you must see for yourself that it will be best to leave here at once."

He paused, and Halleran looked at him steadily, his dull eyes quickening into a dangerous light. "My wife is dead," he said slowly, "and my daughter is dead, and my grandchild is dead to my old age. I would starve and rot before I tasted a crust of yours; but leave the little one to you I will not while there is a breath still in my body. She shall one day learn the truth."

Dr. Stanhope took a step forward. "She shall never learn it!" he said distinctly. "You say that I put half the world between you and your daughter. I will put it again between you and Essie, and, if ocean and land can keep you apart, she shall never see your face. And now—"

"Father," interrupted Lesley in a low voice, "look!"

He turned and saw Essie standing by the curtained door,

watching them both with wondering, frightened eyes, her fair skin and golden hair brought into sharp relief by the sombre background against which she leaned.

"Essie," he said huskily, "go away! This is no place for you."

The child never seemed to heed him. Her forehead was contracted, her eyes half filled with tears. Slowly she came forward until she stood by Halleran's elbow. "And are you my real grandfather?" she asked, with a puzzled look and tone. "Were you truly my mamma's father, and have you come here just to see me?"

He stooped and kissed her gently. "She is like my own come back to me," he murmured, "and no lovelier than my darling used to be."

Essie looked at him curiously, but without a particle of the innate disgust that dwelt in Lesley's eyes. She felt no repugnance to his rags and poverty; only a pity and a wonder that it should be so. "You need not cry," she said softly, as she touched with her little fingers his frayed and torn sleeve. "You know we can buy you plenty of new things."

"Essie!" cried her father, "I told you to leave the room! Lesley, take her away and teach her, if you can, to be silent. Go!" he added angrily, as she lingered still, and Lesley, taking her by the hand, drew her to the door. Here she stopped for an instant and turned around, her little face serious and troubled, her deep eyes wandering wistfully from her father's averted head to the bowed figure by his side. She would have run back even then, but Lesley held her firmly; and as the dark curtains hid her from their sight the two men turned and faced one another, each with a new determination in his soul.

PART II.

After a social storm there follows generally a profound lull which makes us wonder now and then if anything has really happened to mar the accustomed evenness of our lives. So it was now in Dr. Stanhope's household. Lesley, when she left her father's study, took Essie up to her room and tried to make her understand that this visit of her grandfather's was something she must not talk about to any one. To the child's rapid questions she returned a few guarded but truthful answers. There had been enough deception in the matter already, and Lesley was determined that she would be accessory to no further conceal-

ment beyond that afforded by mere silence. When she met her father again at lunch the unwelcome visitor had departed. What had passed between them no one knew; but Dr. Stanhope, though a trifle paler and quieter than usual, had regained his accustomed manner, and seemed in nowise troubled by the morning's interview. He never alluded to the subject but once afterwards, and then only to say a few cold words of warning, and to accede reluctantly to Lesley's demand that Jack Burroughs should be told all.

"I am sorry to ask it of you, father," she said firmly; "but I will marry no man while concealing anything from him. I could not look my husband in the face, if I were keeping a secret he might any day discover."

So Mr. Burroughs was informed of the truth, and took it very easily. He laughed a little at the doctor's predicament; hoped the matter would be smoothed over without a squabble; told Lesley she was a good girl to insist on telling him everything, and then apparently forgot all about the subject. Indeed, there seemed to be other and more important matters weighing on his mind, for he had grown restless and troubled of late, and had lost a great portion of the careless good-humor which had always characterized him. Lesley saw the change and pondered over it, wondering now and then why she felt so heavy-hearted, and why no one seemed to be just as they were before. Her father was silent and absorbed, her lover distract and unresponsive; Miss Grantly alone retained her even gentleness of manner, and in her company Lesley found a welcome distraction from unpleasant thoughts.

As the weather grew warmer Essie's school-hours were shortened, and she was permitted to roam unmolested over the grounds, while her sister and governess idled away the days together—sometimes alone, often with Mr. Burroughs as an escort in their walks and drives. For Mabel Grantly these hours of pleasant luxury were golden ones, and she extracted from them all possible flavor; being one of those rare characters who, while always watching the future, can yet pause to enjoy the present. She exhausted the resources of her wardrobe in trying to look her daintiest, and accepted willingly enough Lesley's generous gifts without ever warming into a spark of loyalty towards the giver. She had been cast upon the world to carve out her own fortune, and, with no positive ill-will towards any one, she would not have deviated a hair-breadth from the clear path of self-advancement to have picked up a

fainting sister by the way. Lesley, too honest to be a shrewd observer, thought her merely a young and charming girl, whose hard lines gave her a double claim to sympathy and liking, and whose undoubted refinement made her a pleasant companion for lonely hours. She was not given to violent fancies or to the swiftly-formed attachments of girlhood; but she was slower even to distrust than to love, and was content to read others by the key-note of her own integrity. And so the ill-matched couple became what most people would call friends; and Dr. Stanhope said his daughter was fortunate in having such congenial society; and the neighbors said it was a lucky thing for that pretty little governess that the rich Miss Stanhope seemed to be so taken with her; and perhaps in her secret heart Mabel Grantly thought that luck sometimes changes with the tide.

It was a heavy afternoon in August, and Lesley, too restless to read or work and too languid to venture out of doors, had wandered, book in hand, around the house until she was tired of her own company. Miss Grantly had confessed to a headache, and had gone to her room to nurse it. Essie was invisible, and Dr. Stanhope was execrating the hot weather in the shady coolness of his library. Out in the sunshine two little children toiled up the path carrying a heavy basket between them, and stopping now and then to take breath and wipe their streaming faces. Lesley had often before noticed the thin, drooping figures bearing the same burden with unchildish patience, but it had never occurred to her to feel especially sorry for them. They were the washer-woman's little girls, and if it belonged to their station in life to drag around heavy baskets it was natural, of course, that they should do so. But to-day the sun shone down so fiercely on their unprotected heads, and their weariness was so apparent in every step, that her heart smote her as she watched them, and into her mind crept the unbidden thought: "Had Essie's mother ever been a child like these?"

Shading her eyes, she opened the French window and stepped out on the lawn. "You poor hot little things!" she said. "How far do you have to come?"

The children stared at her, shy and startled by so much notice. "It's a good half-mile, miss," said the older girl faintly, while the younger pushed back her hair and shifted the basket from one hand to the other in embarrassed silence.

"Half a mile, and in such weather! Why, it's enough to kill you! You must have some milk and fruit, and rest awhile before you think of going home."

"Thank you, miss!" said the child who had spoken before, while her sister grinned a silent approbation; and Lesley, forgetting the heat, strolled part way up the garden-path and gave orders that the tired little things should be fed and rested and given some peaches to take home. Then she turned off in the direction of the orchard, where the shady, low-branched trees promised a welcome retreat from the scorching sunbeams which flecked the gravel-walk with points of light and quivered over the long, hot garden and the sleepy fields beyond. But she never reached the leafy shelter that she sought, for out of the shadow of the trees and into the dazzling sunshine stepped two figures, a girl in white and a man who was talking low and earnestly. The blood rushed fiercely into Lesley's face, and, shrinking behind the hedge, she watched Mabel Grantly pause, laugh, and turn coquettishly away, and saw her affianced husband kiss the little hand so carelessly held out to him. The next instant she confronted them, standing white and silent in their path, with a look of mingled pain and scorn in her brown eyes that one at least of the offenders never forgot until his dying day. With the shame of his dishonor upon him, Jack Burroughs had no word of self-defence to offer; but it was plain that Miss Grantly viewed the matter in quite a different light. There was no trace of agitation in the smiling face or in the clear, even tones; but there was an evident determination to hold her own, and a subtle triumph lurking in her manner, as if she knew that the day was hers.

"Are you surprised to see my headache so much better?" she asked composedly. "I have always found that the fresh air is the best remedy after all, and to-day it has done me a world of good already."

Lesley did not answer. She had no intention of being drawn into a war of words, though a swift, half-pleading glance at her fiancé seemed to beg for an explanation of the mystery. But the eyes which should have met hers were heavy and downcast, and for a minute nothing broke the silence save the impatient chirp of a robin over their heads. "Have you nothing to say to me?" Lesley asked.

Jack Burroughs looked up, his bronzed face suffused with scarlet. "Forgive me!" he whispered. "I could not help it, for I love her with my whole soul."

The girl quivered as if she had been struck; but her natural self-control was stronger to help her now than even her wounded pride. "I will release you," she said simply; "and I hope that to her, at least, you will be true."

She slipped off her engagement-ring and held it out to him, but he made no motion to take it, and the glittering diamond dropped upon the grass. Mabel Grantly took a step forward. "You need not be so premature, Miss Stanhope," she said coldly. "I have no intention of marrying Mr. Burroughs, and have never given him any right to claim me. I considered him as bound in honor to you."

Lesley smiled a little, bitter smile. "You were very considerate," she said.

"Perhaps I was," was the light rejoinder; "but, at any rate, there is no reason why I should separate you two. I repeat, I am not going to marry Mr. Burroughs."

"Mabel!" he said appealingly, but she never noticed him; her eyes were fixed on Lesley, who had turned into the path leading to the house. "I will not have you leave me thus!" she cried abruptly. "I have done nothing so very amiss, and am not responsible for your lover's fickleness. You shall not throw the blame upon me!"

There was no answer; Lesley, with a silence more contemptuous than words, never even looked at her, but continued quietly on her way. Mabel Grantly followed and laid a detaining hand upon her arm. She was pale now, and her soft blue eyes sparkled with an evil light. But she stood erect and unabashed, for her hour of triumph was at hand, and all things had come to her who knew how to wait. "Lesley Stanhope," she said, "you must hear me. If you do not choose to respect me as your sister's governess, you shall as your father's wife."

She paused and noticed with cruel amusement the white, puzzled face turned to her own, and heard the sharp sound of Jack Burroughs' foot upon the gravel. "It is true," she repeated slowly. "I have only been engaged to Dr. Stanhope for two days, and I am going to take Essie to the sea-shore for the rest of the summer. In November we will be married."

She stopped, included them both in a little, mocking bow, and strolled away. Lesley, without a word, turned sharply in another direction; Mr. Burroughs was left under the apple-trees alone.

Safe in her own room, Lesley sat for hours trying to realize the change that had come into her life. Dazed with the shock, she saw the whole fabric of her earthly happiness crumble at her feet, and felt vaguely conscious that she stood deserted and alone; the past closed for ever, the future stretching blindly on before. She was too confused as yet for grief, or even for a full appreciation of her position; she only knew that her idols had

been shattered, and, in her youth and inexperience, she believed it impossible to survive their loss and live. Spiritual resources she had none; courage and fortitude were things she understood, but resignation was a word omitted from her vocabulary, and of whose very meaning she was ignorant. True as steel, generous in her impulses, and just to all, she had never found much cause for self-reproach. Her life had always been a happy one, and her sleepy conscience at ease with itself and the rest of the world. Now suddenly cut adrift from her sheltered moorings, she began to realize that her soul was driven by fiercer storms than she had ever dreamed of, and to wonder vainly where she should turn for safety. She had been taught to hold religion in unquestioned reverence, at the same time letting it as much alone as possible. To drive to church on clear Sundays was the correct embodiment of an excellent principle; to visit the poor occasionally, a laudable work, provided always that the poor selected were respectable, tolerably clean, and free from contagious diseases. Beyond this it was best never to meddle in these matters, and Lesley, not being spiritually inclined, had been content hitherto to follow her instructions. She knew nothing of that warning which has come down to us through generations: "He that clingeth to the creature shall fall with its falling." She had given her whole trust unhesitatingly to those she loved, and they had failed her in her need.

Her painful reverie was broken at last by a message from her father, saying he would like to see her for a few minutes in the library; and, rousing herself, Lesley went wearily down-stairs. The skies were darkened with an approaching storm, and a deathlike stillness brooded over the tall tree-tops, which hung heavy and drooping in the sullen air. The same atmosphere of breathless expectancy seemed to pervade the house, as though the ominous lull which precedes the rising wind held it, too, in check. In his dim and quiet study Dr. Stanhope was pacing up and down, with a look half angry, half resolute on his face and an impatient, troubled step. He turned sharply around as his daughter entered.

"Lesley," he said, "I have something important to tell you—something you will be sorry to hear."

"Do you mean your engagement, father?" she asked in a low voice.

He stared at her and continued his walk. "No, no," he said. "Of course I meant to tell you that as well, but I am very glad you know it already. It is the only softening spot in my sum-

mer's annoyance and worry. She is a lovely girl, and I am most fortunate to win such a gentle and judicious mother for Essie and such a charming little wife for myself. Now I can see you married with a better heart."

Lesley made no answer. She was not thinking now of Mabel Grantly, but of her own young mother, who lay in the church-yard near, and of Hester Halleran, who slept forgotten by the Mediterranean Sea. Was there no such thing as faithfulness in the world? Her lip curled scornfully, but her eyes were dim with tears, and for the first time a sensation of pity for the low-born wife who had sacrificed so much to gain so little filled her soul. She had resented her taking her mother's place, but now they were both alike forsaken, and she felt that their cause was one.

Dr. Stanhope took a few steps in silence, and then continued in a lower voice and with an altered manner: "What I want to speak to you about is something I have just heard of Essie. That scoundrel Halleran, whom I thought well out of the road, has eluded my vigilance, and has actually been all this time in the neighborhood; and, what is much worse, Essie has had constant communication with him."

"Impossible!" cried Lesley, startled out of her self-abstraction. "Where could they have met?"

"Oh! that was easy enough, thanks to the child being unwatched all day long. He is living in a little cottage behind the Stewart mill, and all she had to do was to cross the mill-stream unnoticed and spend as much time with him as she liked. Heaven only knows what nonsense he has taught her by this time!"

"I am very sorry father," said Lesley, taking, as usual, the blame upon her shoulders. "But Essie has always been accustomed to run about where she liked, and I did not know there was any cause for apprehension."

"Nor I, or this folly would have come to a speedy end long ago, as it shall now. Did Miss Grantly tell you she was going to take Essie to the sea-shore?"

"Yes, she mentioned it to me."

"Well, I have changed my plans, and, to insure her being safe in future from Halleran's pertinacity, I intend sending her abroad at once."

"Abroad!" repeated Lesley, "and with Miss Grantly?"

"Of course with Miss Grantly. They are to leave early tomorrow morning, and will sail from New York on Thursday. I

have arranged for their spending the rest of the summer at Nice, and in the fall I will go over to them."

"And be married abroad, father?"

"Yes; it suits me best, and I shall be spared the fuss and notoriety of a home wedding. It is a heavy trial for me to part with Essie for so long, but I feel the necessity to be imperative, and I shall know her to be in good hands."

One great rebellious tear dropped from Lesley's eyes, and she succeeded with difficulty in choking back its fellows. She felt so lonely and desolate that it seemed doubly hard to know that all her father's hopes, and plans, and affections were for those two, and that she alone bore no part in his calculations. She might, perhaps, be useful to him, but that was all.

"The reason why I sent for you," Dr. Stanhope went on, "was to ask you to get Essie's things together quietly, so that she will be ready to start in the morning without making a stir among the servants. Miss Grantly says that old Alice is ruining the child by over-indulgence, and she prefers not taking her along. So they will cross alone, and secure a French maid in Paris. Also I want you to break the news to Essie to-night, so that she will have a good sleep on it, and not treat us to a scene to-morrow."

"Father," pleaded Lesley, "I think the child will be very unhappy if you send her so far away without even her old nurse to comfort her. She is so painfully shy with strangers, and has not yet grown fond of Miss Grantly."

"That," said Dr. Stanhope pithily, "is pure nonsense. Between you and Alice, Essie has been greatly spoiled, and the quicker she gets under new influences the better. Besides, she will learn to love Miss Grantly all the more readily if she has no one else to fall back upon. My mind is quite made up on the subject, but I want you to reconcile her as far as possible to the separation. Once among new scenes, she will soon grow happy and contented."

Lesley offered no further remonstrance. In the midst of her own sorrow her heart ached for her little sister; but she was powerless to help her, and nothing remained but to tell her as gently as possible of the approaching change. She packed the trunk without asking assistance from any one, and when night came took Essie to her room and told her in a few kind words what was to happen in the morning. But it was in vain that she spoke of the delights of crossing the ocean, or described in glowing terms the beautiful places they were going to see. Essie,

with her face hidden on her sister's shoulder, would listen to no consolation, but wept and wept as if her little heart were breaking with its grief. "If you were only going with me!" she sobbed, "or papa, or Alice. But O Lesley! I hate her so, I hate her so!"

"Hush, Essie!" was the weary answer, "and listen to me. Miss Grantly will not be unkind to you, and you must try and learn to like her better. I am sorry for you, dear, but you know you have brought this on yourself."

A fresh burst of sobs was the only reply, and Lesley went on: "It is too late to help it now, but I always believed, Essie, that you, at least, were honest and truthful. How could you keep such a secret from us all?"

The child raised her flushed face for an instant and met her sister's eyes. "It was not my secret," she whispered, "so I could not tell it. And he is my own dear mamma's father, and he loves me just as he used to love her when she was a little girl; and I cannot go away without saying good-by to him. Lesley, dear Lesley"—and the small arms were wound tightly around her neck—"may I see him just once before I leave—only once to say good-by?"

Lesley shook her head. "You know very well, Essie," she said, "that it cannot be. Father has forbidden it, and you are only a little girl and must obey him. He is going after you in a few months."

"To bring me home again?"

"Perhaps so; or may be you will go to school and have a nice time with other children. And now I will put you to bed myself, for if Alice comes up you and she will cry half the night, and I want you to be my brave little sister."

"But I cannot sleep ever," moaned Essie fretfully, "when it storms so."

"Nonsense! I will close the shutters, and then you won't see the lightning."

"Yes, I will; it shines through the chinks. And, besides, I can hear the thunder all the same, and the wind. I am not afraid of them one bit, only they keep me awake. O Lesley! I wish there would be another flood, so that papa couldn't send me away in the morning."

In truth, the night was not one conducive to peaceful slumber, and when Lesley had at last escaped to her room she lay for hours listening to the rain beating furiously against the panes, and to the hoarse wind that now crept stealthily around the

house, pushing the scattered leaves before it, and now sprang fiercely at the casements, rattling them like an angry man determined to force an entrance. Oppressed with a vague sense of fear stronger even than her dejection, the voices of the storm seemed fraught with a dismal meaning to her ears; and if she dozed for a minute it was only to find herself battling with the elements or driven helplessly hither and thither by their unresting fury. Twice she arose and went with noiseless step into Essie's room, and the dimly-burning lamp showed her each time the child sleeping peacefully, one little arm thrown above her head, the other hand holding fast to something—Lesley could not see what—that she wore around her neck. With a strange softening in her heart and an affection never felt before Lesley stooped over the bed and kissed her sister's face, upturned as though to meet her own; then, going back to her room, locked herself resolutely in, determined to leave it no more that night. Towards morning the storm abated, and at last she fell asleep, never wakening until the sun was streaming brightly in her window.

A low tap at the door startled her from her drowsiness, and she opened it to see Alice, the nurse, standing outside, with a white, scared face and trembling fingers that plucked absently at the strings of her apron. "Miss Essie?" she asked hurriedly. "Is she in here with you?"

"With me!" answered Lesley. "Certainly not. She slept in her own bed last night."

The girl gave a low cry. "She is not there now," she said. "Come and look for yourself."

Snatching her wrapper, Lesley flew bare-footed to her sister's room. The night-lamp was burning still, though the open shutters let in the cheerful light of day. The little bed was empty, and Essie's night-dress and one tiny slipper lay across the foot. Glancing in the closet, Lesley saw that the coat and hat which had been hung there in readiness for the morning were gone.

"Alice," she said, "when you came in the room were the shutters open or closed?"

"Tight shut, Miss Lesley, all but one in the corner here. I opened the rest myself."

"Then Essie must have gotten up before daylight and dressed by the lamp. She has probably gone out for a last run, and will be back in time for breakfast. Now, don't be foolish and hysterical, Alice, but go down-stairs at once and tell Dr. Stanhope if he is up. I will be dressed in a few minutes, and we can

go and look for her then. There is no need to speak of the matter to the other servants."

The girl obeyed, and Lesley, hurrying on her clothes, ran down to meet her father in the library. He looked troubled and anxious, but was outwardly composed, and spoke in his usual manner. "I am going out now to hunt up Essie and bring her home," he said. "Where do you suppose she has run to?"

Lesley hesitated. "I think," she said—"that is—I am afraid—that she has gone to say good-by to her grandfather."

Dr. Stanhope muttered something between his teeth and took a few hurried steps in evident anger and dismay.

"She was very anxious to see him once more," Lesley went on, "and I fear that, wakening early this morning, she slipped out for that purpose before it was quite light."

She paused, and the two exchanged a silent glance, each one reading a mutual fear in the other's averted eyes. "The mill-stream!" groaned Dr. Stanhope, "and the heavy rains last night! Halleran shall answer—"

"Hark!" cried Lesley, turning white. "What was that?"

A woman's scream rent the air, a pitiful cry of grief and terror; and there at the door stood Halleran himself, gray and haggard in the morning light, holding a dripping burden in his arms. Alice, trembling and weeping, was at his side, but he never noticed her. His eyes were fixed on Dr. Stanhope's face, and at his feet he laid without a word the drowned body of his little daughter.

For an instant there was a breathless silence, as if the dead stood looking at the dead; then, with a sharp cry, Lesley fell on her knees and raised the lifeless head upon her bosom. The fair curls hung dank and matted over the white forehead; the eyes were closed, the little face peaceful in its last sleep. With a vain regret she kissed the sweet, cold lips, and felt her heart ache at the thought of the love she might have given and had withheld. Then for the first time she ventured to look up at her father, and saw him standing silent and rigid, his eyes fixed with a strange, blank stare on Essie's face, as if the horror of the thing had driven him mad. Suddenly he stooped and took his little daughter in his arms, her fair head resting on his shoulder, her cheek pressed close to his. "Hester," he whispered, "she is yours now. Forgive me, dearest wife!"

Halleran took a step forward. He spoke in answer to a look of inquiry from Lesley, for Dr. Stanhope never noticed him at all. "It was early this morning," he said in a low voice, "and I

had gone out for a breath of fresh air. The storm had kept me awake all night, and something seemed to be weighing heavy-like on my heart. The mill-stream was swollen by the rain and was running very fast; it had washed away part of the bridge, and the rest looked rotten and slippery. Down by the willow-tree there was something entangled in the branches that grow into the water, and I went to look what it was. There I saw my darling's child lying cold and dead, with her innocent face turned towards heaven."

His voice trembled and broke; he struggled for a moment with his tears, and then grew calmer. It even seemed to Lesley that his grief had invested him with a new dignity, and that he had risen to a nobler level. "She is safe with her mother now," he said simply, "and I am alone. May it please God to call me in his good time!"

He stole a last lingering look at the child, still in her father's arms, and turned silently away, going out in his helpless old age to meet the last buffets of an unkind world. Weak, and broken, and poverty-stricken, he went forth, as he said, alone; and neither Lesley nor her father ever saw or heard of him again. That his story was true none could doubt. The state of the bridge confirmed his words, and clinging to a splintered board was found Essie's straw hat, showing too plainly where the little feet had slipped.

A silent house, where all day long the servants speak in whispers and stand crying in the halls, yet take a certain pleasure, nevertheless, in conjecturing with many tears just how the tragedy was brought about. Outside the village children gather in little groups, and weep, and tell each other for the twentieth time how it all happened, and wonder what the drowned child looks like, and whether they will be admitted to the funeral. If curiosity and a breathless interest sweeten their sense of a grief, it is none the less honest for that; and their tears are heartfelt as they recall the well-known little figure cantering down the lanes. Isolated in his library, Dr. Stanhope has refused all consolation and sympathy, and will admit no one to his solitude. His best hopes and affections lie dead with his lost child, and for the time his sorrow crushes him. Miss Grantly also keeps her room, save when carriage-loads of commiserating friends arrive and she alone can see them. Her pale, tear-stained face is by far the most attractive in the house, and all who meet her go away charmed and touched by her graceful and well-bred distress.

She lays up for herself golden opinions in these few days which will do her good service by and by. Dr. Stanhope's refusal to see her now does not trouble her in the least, for she knows well how soon a selfish grief exhausts itself; and she knows, too, that the only influence strong enough to conflict with hers is gone for ever. Henceforth she rules alone.

And Lesley, forgotten in her father's heart, and no longer the mistress even of his home, is conscious of nothing but her own sorrow and pity. She glides around the house, white and silent, the ghost of her old gay self, but composed and rational still; so that the servants shake their heads when they meet her, and say, with many a shrug and sniff, indicative of strong disfavor, that it's wonderful how some people can bear up under their losses. She sees that her father's meals are sent to him regularly, and dines alone in the big, gloomy room, with little appetite, poor child! and to the great disedification of the cook, who considers that unlimited tea-drinking in her apartment would be a more fitting expression of her grief. When the day of the funeral comes she and Alice prepare the little corpse for its last resting-place. Around Essie's neck is a narrow white ribbon, and fastened to it a small, much-worn silver medal. Lesley looks at it curiously, but can make nothing out of the few dim outlines or the half-erased inscription. She feels sure that it was Halleran's gift, and that it was this that her sister held in her hand the night before her death. But what she does not know is that the same smooth bit of silver has been worn by Essie's mother when she, too, was a child. She hesitates a moment—Lesley is not partial to charms of any kind—and then, moved by a feeling she could not explain, replaces it carefully around her little sister's neck and hides it under the white frock. "If you loved it you shall keep it, dear," she whispers, kissing the closed eyes, "and no one shall take it from you."

All is in readiness now, and, going out in the corridor, she stands by the darkened window, absorbed in painful thoughts. Suddenly a hand is laid upon her arm, and, turning around, she sees Jack Burroughs looking keenly at her with eyes that tell at once their pity and their shame. "Lesley," he says imploringly, "I have come to beg for pardon."

The girl lifts her heavy lids. "I forgive you, Jack," she says wearily. "It was not all your fault."

"I was a mad fool!" he mutters, with angry bitterness; "but that bad dream is over at last, and I have come back to you. Will you try and trust in me again?"

She looks at him now for the first time, and without emotion of any sort. "I could never trust you again," she says distinctly.

A crimson flush mounts into his cheek, but he resolutely holds his ground. "Lesley," he says in a half-whisper, "this is no time to talk of love, but it maddens me to think how desolate and alone you are. Your father's house will be no home for you after he is married, and if you cast me off who is left to protect you? I have been frightfully to blame, I know, and have allowed a pair of blue eyes to draw me away from you for a little time; but if you make your sentence so severe remember that you will wreck the happiness of both. Believe me, this world is not so full of joy that you can afford to throw away any portion of it even for the sake of your justly-wounded pride. Think for a moment of what our lives will be apart, and then come back to me."

He tries to take her hand, but she draws it gently from him. "You do not understand me, Jack," she says, sighing. "It is not pride that stands between us, but a dead love. A week ago I would have trusted you against the whole world; but what room is left for my faith now when another pair of blue eyes may tempt you away again? The affection that is built on mistrust is worthless, and we should only find it out too late. Even loneliness would be easier to bear than that."

"Do you really mean it, Lesley?" he asks. "And is your decision final?"

"I really mean it, and my decision is final. How can I hope to change?"

He comes close to her and looks at her pale face and in her troubled eyes, but reads there no shadow of relenting—only a listless sorrow and indifference. "And you can talk of faithfulness and love!" he cries bitterly—"you who are without a heart!"

For an instant she stares at him wonderingly. "And if I am," she answers slowly, "it is you who have helped to break it."

He turns without another word and leaves her standing by her sister's door, and she goes softly in. White and pure and lovely, Essie lies in her little flower-strewn coffin; lilies at her head and feet, and in her waxen hands. Death wraps her round as a mantle, and the mystery of the unseen world dwells in the hushed figure and in the tranquil face. To Lesley, standing by her side, there comes suddenly the sharp conviction that

the loss of this child, whom she had never loved, is the heaviest part of her sorrow. Perhaps her little sister's innate truthfulness had been the only bond between them, but that at least was a tie that nothing had severed. If the child had kept her pitiful secret to the end, it was only because it was not hers to tell. Now that the loyal heart is still and cold, and the eager spirit fled for ever, Lesley feels with a bitter pang how dear she might have grown. There seems nothing left to fill her empty soul, which cries out vainly for strength and consolation. The world is going round with her, and all that she has valued has slipped from her powerless fingers. With a sudden cry she falls on her knees beside the little coffin and lays her face close to the pale, cold cheek.

“Essie, Essie,” she sobs, “look down from heaven and listen to me now! You see your mother’s face, but the face of mine is turned away from me. You stand in the full light, and I walk still in darkness. Help me, my dear little sister, that I may follow you!”

A PAPER CITY.*

BY D. R. LOCKE (REV. PETROLEUM V. NASBY).

CHAPTER X.

TOM PADDLEFORD'S WEDDING.

TOM PADDLEFORD always said that if he couldn't be married in style he wouldn't be married at all. His ideas on this subject, as well as on the perfections of the lady who should accompany him in this rite, were so emphatic that his most intimate friends were of the opinion he would have to dispense with the ceremony altogether, as some of his better-informed brethren are in the habit of doing. But it is given to few mortals to see their dearest wishes gratified as literally as Mr. Paddleford's were. The lady he was to marry had his favorite points of style. She wore a number two slipper, and, to use her future husband's phrase, "she held herself together well," assisted by a sixteen-inch corset, and "always dressed as if she knew her business." Mr. Tom's bride was suitably perfect. What shall be said of Mr. Tom's wedding?

It was curious; but everybody who spoke of the event invariably called it Tom Paddleford's wedding, as if that sufficient and pervasive young man meant to take the whole share and glory of it on himself.

In general, strict propriety demands that a bridegroom should be the last person to know anything of the preparations for his nuptials, and he is on his honor to ignore such hints of the festivities as fall in his way. But Mr. Tom was not to be bound by any conventionalities that had not been drilled into him by his pet authorities, Chicago commercial men; and Mrs. Lewis, being a mother-in-law holding lightly points of etiquette which did not come through her oracle, her sister-in-law in Chicago, was not aware of the responsibility put upon her by modern high breeding, and would have disliked it in this case, as depriving her of most zealous and efficient help in her arrangements. Mary Lewis would do nothing, decide nothing for her own wedding; and Tom and her mother between them managed the invitations, chose the supper, and Tom with his own hands arranged the parlors, the afternoon before the bridal. As Mrs. Lewis and Tom took a last look at the parlors, about half-past five, before going to dress for the evening, the result seemed to them not unworthy the pains bestowed upon it.

Like many country houses, the Lewis house, apparently spacious without, was found cut up in contracted rooms within. But, if the parlors were not as large as expected, there was no limit to their being as showy as they chose. The first thing one was conscious of, on entering, was a glare of light wall, in contrast to a carpet of very dark, high colors, which took precedence of everything else in the room. Mrs. Lewis took pride in her parlor carpets, as none of your cheap tapestries, which anybody could buy who had a second carpet at all, but a "body Brussels," of substantial price and vigorous pattern and color. A visitor whose mind was rather narrowed by notions of taste complained that the carpet in question always made her think of Hades—its black ground, with lurid scrolls of red, having a fire-and-smoke effect that inevitably suggested popular images of torment. But the robust imagination of Mrs. Lewis was above such weakness. She liked a carpet that gave her something to study on, and the blood-red arabesques of her beloved Brussels held such roses and blue tulips as you could not make out in a day or cover with your foot. Further, the double parlors owned the dignity of a full-length pier-glass, with marble slab and flourishing gilt brackets, and a mantel mirror of the same lavish blazonry, both bought at a hotel auction in Chicago, when Mrs. Lewis was furnishing her house, after the war. The newness of the walnut and gilt window cornices was rather out of keeping with their bygone splendor. But the eyes of New Canton guests did not suffer from such discrepancies. Lace curtains of Nottingham, very stiff and very blue, looked rather chilly, without the protecting aid of chintz or damask, at the long windows; and the furniture of striped

green reps was bright and new as a coffin dealer's stock. The piano, bought with an eye to having four round corners and the largest, scrolliest legs in Chicago, was across a corner—the prevailing idea among New Canton young ladies of giving a room an artistic air; and the walls further reflected the "taste and refinement" of its owners by life-size crayon photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis—the lady in such a spread of lace shawl, with cameo ear-drops and necklace, as made the envy of all her female friends who did not know these properties were borrowed from her sister in Chicago, the wife of a grain speculator, who put funds into his wife's ornaments for investment. There was also a smaller picture of Mary, apparently habited in a lace shawl, from which her shoulders rose bare like the moon from a cloud; her hair let down her back and her eyes uplifted, in the style then most affected by photographers. On the other wall a chromo of Lake George balanced one of Niagara, each side of a fruit piece, exhibited at the county fair, and bought by Mr. Lewis, to give struggling home talent a lift. A portrait of Mr. Lincoln, uglier than it was necessary to make that thrice-martyred man, opposed a diploma won by Mr. Lewis' Cochin China fowls at the same fair, and any vacant space was filled by an assortment of mottoes, in gay illuminated colors, such as "What is home without a mother?" highly suited to any house where Mrs. Lewis held that relation, and texts of the most affecting sort, such as "Jesus wept," or "We all do fade as a leaf," in cheerful adaptation to the thoughts and feelings of the usual visitor. The back parlor gave the place of honor to Mary's drawing of her old home, which people always recognized the moment they were told what it was. A crayon head of the water-witch, by the same fair artist—the hair hardly rooted to the head, and looking as if the nymph's teeth hurt her—showed great room for promise, as a stray connoisseur once ventured to say. Nor were the small feminine elegancies wanting supposed to give rooms a homelike charm—such as velvet photograph-stands, woolly as to the velvet and as to the gilding thin; or hanging bead-baskets, filled with artificial flowers. The usual bay window grew red geraniums, callas, and orange flowers, which women cultivate because they give the most show and smell for the trouble, and are to a house-garden what a white calf would be in a collection of house pets. Mary's piano showed the correct assortment of music. The last high-pitched song of Millard's, some pretty jingling waltzes, which sounded as if played with the forefinger by the fair performer, and sentimental pieces, like the "Maiden's Prayer," "Streamlet's Murmur," or "Spilling Spray," in company with the "Golden Lute," or "Nickel Censer," or whatever metallic fancy in names had just then taken the place of the "Carmina Sacra" and Mendelssohn collection, with their honest harmonies. A small table, with embroidered cover, held the family Bible, in turkey leather and gilt edges, presented to Mary's father and mother on their marriage, which looked as if it had never been opened since; Mary's album of her girl friends and lovers; and a slim, brilliantly gilt volume, with the menacing inscription "Autographs," to fill which Mary had sweetly badgered authors and statesmen, and so far succeeded that she felt her collection would be complete when she could get Victor Hugo's and M. F. Tupper's. A Turkish chair, with large red roses done on a black stripe, purported to be the work of Mrs. Lewis, in the elegant leisure of summer visits; while the sawed and pressed carving in brackets, wall-pockets, frames, and puzzles abounded, till the parlors wore an air between a furnishing shop and a church fair. For Mrs. Lewis and Mary belonged to the school of women who dread to see a room look bare, if it has room to put a newspaper down or a yard of wall for the eye to rest upon.

But for Tom Paddleford to have a wedding just like anybody else's would be worse than having none at all, and his genius must show itself worthy the occasion. Rumors were rife of further splendors waiting favored guests in the Lewis mansion. The afternoon train from Chi-

cago brought hampers, addressed to the bridegroom, exhaling undisguised sweetness, and it was said about the streets that the ambitious young man meant to have flowers at his wedding—flowers in March—flowers by the bushel-basketful.

In his visits to Chicago, Tom had made a point of going to all the fashionable weddings and funerals at the churches; and his friends, the drummers of the business houses he dealt with, kept him kindly informed as to the most brilliant ceremonies to come off and were most good-natured in securing seats for him when the church was open to the public. What appealed to Mr. Paddleford's sensibilities most on such occasions was what he was never heard to mention save as "the floral display." Roses and lilies would have stood a poor chance of Mr. Tom's acquaintance on their native soil; but, combined with florist's skill, in harps, anchors, ships, crowns, and such natural and graceful forms as flowers lend themselves to when well wired and packed on frames, his soul was carried captive with them. His heart was set on introducing such a floral display at his nuptials, and he went so far as to drop in at a florist's and inquire the cost of the pageant; but the answer was such as to quench all thoughts of shining by a city florist's aid, and he left the shop in a state of burning indignation at the greed of fashionable purveyors.

After all, he reflected, the flowers weren't worth so much. It was the style that made them cost. Provided he could find the style, couldn't he get the flowers without damaging expense? Why couldn't the florists have flower-pieces to let for weddings, and save unhappy fathers and bridegrooms the bills that make the weeks after a marriage so frightful? If the dealers had any enterprise, he wouldn't mind ordering the gigantic crosses and obelisks from old Dives the millionaire's funeral, and astonishing the natives of New Canton with six-foot erections of roses and lilies. The flowers were all white, and he didn't see why they wouldn't do as well for a wedding as a funeral. How splendid that high cross of callas and azalias would look in front of Mrs. Lewis's big pier-glass, with him and Mary in front of it. But these city shopkeepers were such touchy fellows, a man daresn't mention such a thing to them. Goodness knows, there would be plenty of their customers glad of the chance to make such arrangements.

But, when the time came that Tom really wanted flowers for his wedding, fortune befriended him by one of those propitious accidents which he found always happening to him. One of Tom's Chicago friends, to whom he was introduced by one of the drummers aforesaid, as a lady indulgent on what terms she made acquaintances, so that she only made them, was a Mrs. McCullom, the wife of an army officer, absent with his command in the Northwest. Mrs. McCullom preserved an acknowledged reputability and style on narrow means for either, and the malicious said the lieutenant was glad to purchase existence apart from her by giving up home and family forever. He completed his good intentions toward her by getting killed on a scouting expedition a few months before, and his body had not been rescued. His relict wrote an epistle of such elegant regret and so deplored the last privilege of laying his remains to rest at home that, when his body was recovered, weeks afterward, the officer in command had no more discretion than to forward it, putting Mrs. McCullom to the expense of a funeral, just as she had spent everything on her mourning, in the assurance that there were no burial costs to come in. Tom, who was in town the day before his wedding, could not resist going to see her, and console with her, and talk about his own prospects. And she allowed herself the relief of lamenting her difficulties with great freedom of expression, sure that he would sympathize with any troubles in the way of expense. McCullom was even then at the depot, in his pine box; and his widow must disturb her well-settled grief by giving him a funeral. And it wouldn't do to give him a shabby one, either, for his folks would be there, and she had money coming from them; and she couldn't have any sort of a handsome affair, that would look like

anybody else's funeral, without flowers, and they came so expensive this time of year.

Tom steadied the exultant throbs of his heart as well as he could, and gravely proposed not her selling the flowers—no, indeed; but, if a friend of his, who had lost a child, said Tom (inventing as he went), and been disappointed in getting the flowers they wanted, could have the use of her flowers afterward, without injury to Mrs. McCullom's feelings, there might be an arrangement made, relieving her of part of the bill. He wouldn't dare to mention such a thing; but he happened to know just how both parties were situated, and people in grief would not hesitate about making things easy for each other. He hoped she wouldn't feel hurt at his suggestion, as he would take it on himself to arrange for both parties, so that neither need appear in the market.

The McCullom saw her point, and made a faint show of reluctance, the end of which was, early morning obsequies for the lieutenant, and prompt dispatching of his flowers, packed in wet cotton, to Mr. Tom Paddleford. The flowers really were a credit to the widow's taste, and she had the florist's bill sent to Tom, writing him that his friends could pay what they felt like, and she would make up the rest. Tom paid the bill; but never a dollar did he get from the McCullom. But this is dipping into history too deeply.

"You—your friends will break up the pieces, won't they?" Mrs. McCullom said to him, before he left. "I shouldn't like to run the chance of any one's recognising the flowers"—which was a movement of pure decency on her part and deserves to be recorded. Tom promised, of course; but, when he came to unpack the flowers in his own room, he was so taken with the beauty of the designs and their appropriateness, as he found it, that he tossed his promise over his shoulder. Accordingly—Mrs. Lewis's parlors lighted with the brilliance of swinging lamps of kerosene—the mirrors reflected the flower-pieces, which, in their whiteness, looked like ornamental specimens from a stone-cutter's yard, and their fragrance was dying on the air among the red and black Turkish wool-work, and the cheap brackets, and the badly-drawn crayon head, and the poultry diploma. The slab before the pier-glass was graced by a Bible in white hyacinths, with the words "loved and lost" in deep purple heliotrope, which inscription was much commented on by the guests, as an elegant mode of expressing the feelings of a father and mother on giving up their only daughter; while the bridal pair stood up between a huge cross of black ivy leaves, chosen by the McCullom because ivy made such a show for the money, and a tall cross of tuberoses, surmounted by a crown of violets, taken by the judicious to set forth the expectant cross and crown of married life.

"There never was anything like it in this region," Mrs. Clements, who went out by the day in approved families, declared that evening, to Mrs. Fitzhugh, the cobbler's wife. "The table-cloths came down to the ground, so they had to pin 'em up at the corners; and Miss Lewis must ha' borrowed all the best glass out'n the store, for there was nigh on to two dozen tall deshes, with fancy fruit and jels. And," lowering her voice to suit the impressiveness of her news, "she's got real silver on the table—six cake-baskets and three tall branches with nuts and confectionery! It goes beyond anything New Canton ever saw before. I expect everybody of them that has money will have to be laying in silver now—for there won't none of 'em allow the rest to get ahead of her."

"I reckon we've paid as much as thirty or forty dollars on that silver, then," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, a brown, sallow, waspish-looking woman, who had several children too many and lived in a state of chronic discontent with the world. "A man who lends money at eighteen per cent. to poor folks, and has nothing to do but sit and wait for it to grow, can afford to give his wife what she takes a notion to. If money wasn't so scarce and other folks got paid in proportion to their labor, other folks might have silver at their weddings, too. Luella Adelia, get along into the house this minit. How often have I told you not to run out

in the sun without a bunnit. You'll need all the little good looks you have, for your father can't afford to get no silver for you to get married with."

"Well, I don't know," was the soothing response of the Clements, who had been all day helping for the wedding and was anxious to get back to her topic. "Miss Lewis is a good neighbor as I'd ask to have if I want a using of baking powder; and she isn't above coming into my house, with her apron over her head, Mondays, to borrow my blueing-bag, more'n if she hadn't an account at the store and no questions asked for this or that. I was up-stairs, to see the bride in her wedding-dress, which she was trying on; and she gave me the word to come over in the evening and have a peep at the company, and there would be some cake saved for me. 'I want everybody to get all the comfort they can out of my wedding,' says she. But she did look pretty as an image. Brides always do look well—that veil softens their complexion so. I should think they'd hate to put it off, and come out like other mortals. I don't see how Mary can ever come down to planning what she'll have for dinner and what will take the spots out of her husband's clothes, after she's been training round in that veil and gown and flowers. Tom Paddleford will make life serious for her, though, fast enough. He's got an angel for a wife, and it's mostly them that needs angels gets 'em."

It does not come easily to human nature to wholly approve a neighbor's doings; and it is by this truism that Mrs. Lewis would have consoled herself for the opinions held in common with Mrs. Clements by some of her better acquaintance. These opinions were not hinted merely, even within the walls of her own house and on the very night of the wedding.

"I never knew Mrs. Lewis looking better than she does to-night," said one of two brightly-dressed young matrons, who knew comfort when they saw it, and had subsided on the chintz lounge in the sitting room for a cose in a corner, while the gayeties of the evening went on about them.

"I suppose you and I'd feel satisfied if we were marrying a daughter off as well as she has, or thinks she has," was the answer.

"Mine are all boys," said the first; "and I've often wished one of 'em was a girl. But it wouldn't be to marry her to that Paddleford young one. I always thought he was dreadfully inferior."

"She's got new parlor curtains," said the other, deeming it prudent to change the subject. "I know, for she lent the others for the church tableaux at Christmas. I was on the committee and came over to help her take them down, and they were on her parlor windows then."

That is the way our neighbors keep the details of our households of which we ourselves are hardly conscious.

"That was the time James Gardiner and Mary acted in the 'Spirit of '76,'" whispered the incantuous neighbor. "This wasn't the wedding we expected to attend then."

"It isn't the thing to say in her own house," said Prudence, determined to speak her mind openly when driven into a corner. "But, to my mind, Jim Gardiner was worth twenty like Tom Paddleford; and, if I'm not mistaken, Mrs. Lewis will find out she hasn't done such a smart thing by her daughter, after all. I notice the people who never make mistakes sometimes wish they had the excuse of being no wiser than their neighbors to fall back on."

"They have the girls from the hotel to wait at supper," observed the other, whose gaze had followed the opening of a door into the dining-room. "Did you ever see anything go off better? There's always such confusion, having a large company, when you have to depend on home help. But Mrs. Lewis does understand managing wonderfully!"

"Mrs. Lewis don't have the credit of that notion. I can tell you all about that," said the other. "That Miss Butterfield, who keeps house for Mrs. Burt, planned it all. Mrs. Lewis wanted to get her to come over and superintend, just as she would any hired housekeeper. But Mrs. Burt said she didn't think Emeline would come that way. She dropped a hint to the girl; but she took it mighty cool, till Mrs. Lewis

sent her an invitation, with the rest of the family, and she came over. And she suggested to Mrs. Lewis that the best way to make things go off would be to borrow old Hollis girls, and she wouldn't mind taking the oversight off Mrs. Lewis's shoulders for the evening, as she must want to be thinking of something else the night her daughter was married. And Mrs. Lewis says she hasn't had an atom of care from that minute to this. That girl just stepped in and saw to everything—dressed the tables, and got the dressing-rooms ready, and took care of the country cousins. Mrs. Burt said there wouldn't have been half glass enough, at last, if Emeline hadn't insisted on having a dozen and a half extra. Did you ever taste such coffee at party before?"

"Is it that girl in the lavender dress, with the crape ruches? I never should take her for a housekeeper."

"She's handsome, I tell you. Don't you see there isn't a woman to compare with her in the room?"

"I couldn't see her looks, for her manners, she moves so soft and elegant. You don't mean that's old Butterfield's daughter, out by the Youatt Bluff? He stole her, then; for I'll declare she's none of his."

"Hush! She's behind us. Do you suppose she heard?" asked the neighbors, with distress, as the gliding figure, in sweeping dress, came to a pause near them.

"She gives no sign. Peppernell's coming this way. I wonder what he'll have to unfold."

The Colonel, georgeous in blue swallow-tailed coat and white vest, had been trying to assist everybody to a pleasant evening, and now thought it time to take some enjoyment on his own account. Not to the matrons on the sofa was his attentions directed. He hated women with stuck-up notions, he said; and, as his ideas of stuck-up women included all who objected to miscellaneous swearing and a generally unbraced and shirt-sleeved style of manners, his acquaintance was not coveted by the ladies of New Canton. His steps were apparently directed to the side-table with pitcher and glasses, near which sat Emeline, the spread of her pure and silky skirts graceful, though of most modest material and fashion, her hands crossed in superb indolence, her eyelids down, resting from her cares in the supper-room, with an air that would not have shamed a *duchess* of Madison Square. A sense of power had come with the success of her little manœuvre about the invitation to the wedding, and she felt self-poised and acted so.

Burt, from his corner, where nothing escaped him, saw the change with some wonder. The young lady in the long dress of pale lavender mohair, soft and sheeny in its folds, made with a surprising attention to style and worn with an uprightness and smoothness of carriage that distinguished itself among the awkward, giggling girls of the crowd, looked and moved at least the equal of every creature about her. The man of discrimination, used to wider society than poor Burt, would have recognized her at once for what she was—material for a highbred lady—one of Nature's most gracious molds, for she has many and varying ones of what men call her best. Burt had natural taste enough to recognize the pleasure of the change from the demure maiden his household had known, and he watched quietly to see what might come of it. He saw Peppernell draw near, ostensibly for a glass of water, and his eye sparkled with malicious mischief.

"I think I shall venture to claim acquaintance," he said, with a fascinating grin of the kind apt to go with blue beetle-winged coat and brass buttons. "We have met often enough" (he had seen her at Mr. Burt's), "and I am sure I have had the pleasure of seeing you before you came to town."

"I live at Mrs. Burt's," was the answer, given without the least hesitation, "and my father is Mr. Butterfield, who lives out by the Youatt Bluff."

Though this was said without the slightest accent, two listeners on the lounge heard it with reddening ears.

"The bride is looking sweetly to-night," was the Colonel's next observation. "I approve the custom of countries where the

women wear a veil all the time—most women. There are faces which I would be sorry to see bidden," with a bow which made his words a neatly-turned compliment enough. "We are favored to-night with beauty adorned and unadorned—that is, not much," said the Colonel, lame and embarrassed, finding his idea had not altogether the right sound. "I can't spare all my admiration for the front rooms, you see," where the bridal party was then conspicuous.

"Much obliged for your politeness," said the unmoved beauty; "but you had better keep such pretty speeches for the front rooms, Colonel. I don't know what to do with them."

"I shall be pleased to do so," said the ready besu. "if you will allow me to escort you there, where you belong," bending his arm with alacrity.

But it did not suit Emeline's book to enter notice in the ill-flavored escort of Peppernell. Neither did she mean to offend the doughty Colonel's self-love, as a girl of livelier spirit than tact would have done. She laid the tips of her fingers on the blue coat-sleeve, took half a turn round the back rooms, and, before the Colonel quite knew when or how, he was talking with one of the Lewis cousins, while Emeline escaped to her seat. Burt saw the maneuver and smiled grimly at Peppernell's discomfiture. It was in his way to mark his approval of the girl's cleverness by sending her more acceptable attentions than those she had so adroitly disposed of. Not in any open fashion. That would have been gross tactics for Burt. He sauntered up to a knot of young men who were eyeing the ladies, after the manner of home-bred youth, and it hardly needed the financier's temperate judgment that any gentleman would show his taste in paying civilities to Miss Butterfield, to draw them one after another to her side. What one man admires another man is sure to find good, and the pale lavender dress and the pretty wearer had no reason to complain that her evening was a dull one. It would have done old Hannah Butterfield good to see her beautiful child watched and admired, in a modest way, as she was this evening. Burt glanced at her occasionally with a quiet satisfaction under his impulsive air. He knew his work and was pleased with it.

Later in the evening the bride drew Emeline to her side, and, as the two stood together alone—one pale, shimmering figure, with face as white as her dress—the glowing, dark-eyed, opening loveliness by her side was too marked for the dullest eye to miss. Emeline, looking up, caught Burt's gaze on them from a distance, which changed to a smile as he met her's—a smile so frank, winning, and kind that it changed the whole character of his face. In it she read recognition, complete, respectful—such as she thirsted for. It seemed to bid her have confidence in herself and be happy. It was a tribute that she could take to her room and think over, without loss of its zest or worth. It rayed from his soul so direct and sincere that never afterward did Emeline doubt that she had a friend in her polished, undemonstrative, taciturn employer. This unexpected kindness was all that was wanting to turn her evening into unalloyed pleasure. Happiness lent her its irresistible charm, and the child had only one wish left—that her mother could see her and know how she was enjoying herself and how well folks received her.

But she had been working very hard all day, and toward midnight fatigue began to tell even on her young strength. She stole to a window in the entry, and the soft light of a young moon, just large enough to make the darkness delicious, made it tempting to rest. The next minute a bevy of rustling young ladies invaded her retreat, which was next the dressing-room.

"Make haste," cried one who had the first chance with her powder-puff at the glass. "They are going to have a waltz next, and I want to dance with Tom Paddleford."

"Wait, can't you?" cried another. "My panier is all to one side. That last turn, I knew it."

"I always draw mine so close that it

can't slip," said another young lady, who quietly kept the glass to herself.

"Yes, and wears everything so tight she can hardly breathe," whispered another. And the gay besiegers fled, with freshly-adjusted toilets, appearing below flushed and complacent.

"How sweet it looks in the moonshine," said one who lingered, looking over Emeline's shoulder. "It's so warm in these rooms. Let's go out and walk a minute. It's lovely out."

They borrowed a shawl apiece from the dressing-room and stole out unseen. The night was a mild one for March, with the scents of fresh leaf and sprouting grass in the air. The girls strolled down the deep Lewis grounds, back of which were vacant lots, where the turf was green and soft as velvet and the white oaks threw long shadows. The girls lingered in the welcome spell of the moonlight; and the younger one, with the ready friendliness of girls, stole her arm round Emeline's waist, who thrilled at the touch with sudden pleasure. It was new for her to be on familiar terms even with her own sex. She had been kept at a distance from all whom she would have liked, and had held herself studiously apart from those near her own level, who would have sought her.

"The Colonel is taken with you to-night," said the girl, laughingly. "I hope you will be good to him and console him. He has the best eye for a pretty face you ever saw, and a pretty foot sends him foolish."

"He has no need to come my way, then," said Emeline, disdainfully.

"Come now. Do you want to get somebody to tell you that you are the handsomest woman at the wedding to-night? Everybody is noticing you. If I just had your good looks, there isn't a man in Canton that I would not have, if I wanted him."

"Are they to be had so easy? Won't you give me some lessons?"

"A woman with such looks as you have don't need much teaching. But I won't say any more. If you don't know what you are, the men will teach you fast enough. You keep the Colonel on a string and don't let him once get too near you, or you may be sorry for it. Other girls have been. But you can stay and smell dew as long as you want to. I'm going in."

Emeline lingered a moment alone with the secret that had been revealed to her by common lips. She was beautiful, then, and very beautiful, by this girl's account. Was it true, and could she trust what such a gossip said? She would try her gift, some time, when the right man came.

As she rested, concealed by a screen of thorny locusts, she heard a tread turn off from the street to the footpath which led past the end of the grounds—footsteps weary and dogged, like those of some laboring man going from his work. They stopped just by the hedge where she stood, half dreading to be accosted by some loiterer. Moments passed, and she heard a whisper so full of passion that she thrilled with involuntary pity: "Oh! Mary." And the slow, weary tread turned away, like feet dragging themselves from a beloved grave. Who was the loiterer and what did that sigh mean, the irrepressible, ingenuous utterance of sorrow? Emeline had heard of this being a forced wedding, of a wronged lover, and a false bride. Had she herself been called to receive the last sigh of a faithful heart grieving over its priceless hopes? If some one had been so true to her, would she allow it to sigh so? Such thoughts, half formed, came through the head of the girl, who stood bareheaded under the faint March stars, while the wind that blew up from the valley seemed to bring hopes and promise of love and all she longed for most.

Within, games and dances follow each other gayly. Tom Paddleford is with his chosen friends in a little room off the supper-room, whence issue the sounds of clinking glasses, loud talk, and uproarious laughter. The bride has left the dances; but no one misses her who, with joyless eye and pallid cheek, has contributed less than any other one to the merriment of the evening. The veil and white dress have been taken off by careful hands, folded and laid away, the wreath and gloves placed in their perfumed boxes, and her mother and eldest bridesmaid have left the

room. Shouts of laughter from the room just below indicate that her solitude will not soon be disturbed. For the first time that day she feels free and draws a few breaths of such freedom as will henceforth only be left her when alone. She feels calm, numb—like hunted creatures in the grasp of the destroyer. She goes to the window, veiled by the darkness, and looks out at the silvery beauty of the first spring moon. She forgets the present moment in the delicate, shadowy peace that is abroad. A passing form under the trees by the walk warns her to withdraw; yet she waits a moment, hoping it may pass on. It lingers. An idler, doubtless, attracted by the lights and sound within.

Unhappy love has nothing to blind its vision. The watcher, drawn by a strange, indefinable impulse, had left his solitary musings to gather what he might of a wedding that should have been his own; knew the window which opened from a girl's chamber, and in the shadow of the trees traced the white, slight figure between the parted curtains perfectly. The same numo, careless calmness fell upon him too at the sight. He could not have told what made him gaze at it, as one might look at a confined face, from which the loveliness had departed, delayed too long from the grave which claimed it. A reviving pang warned him that the waking from his trance was near, and with one eloquent gesture he flung his last kiss to the silent, phantom figure and hurried away.

[From the Forum of the People.]

(The editor and his family were invited to the wedding, and Mr. Paddleford advertised in *The Forum*.)

"BEAUTY AND FASHION!"

"THE SOCIAL EVENT OF THE SEASON!"

"WEDDING IN HIGH LIFE!"

"THE Nuptials of THOS. PADDLEFORD, JR., and MRS. MARY LEWIS.—ADORNMENT OF THE HOME OF THE BRIDE'S PARENTS.—THE BRILLIANT TRIO IN PRESENT.—THE CEREMONY.—THE BRIDAL PRESENTS.

"Wednesday evening the most brilliant gathering that ever graced New Canton assembled to do honor to the occasion of the marriage of Thomas Paddleford, Jr., Esq., son of our old and highly-esteemed townsman, Thomas Paddleford, Sr., and Mary, daughter of James Lewis, an equally old and well-known citizen.

"The families represented in this most auspicious event are among the most prominent of the city, and the occasion was one which caused too great a flutter in the high social circles of New Canton to be passed without extended comment.

"While neither of the contracting parties were born here, they passed their earlier childhood in New Canton, and may be said to have resided here all their lives, except the time spent abroad in gaining the education and training which, combined with mental endowments of no ordinary kind, has fitted them to adorn any sphere to which they may be called.

"It would require a more graphic pen than ours to describe the splendor of the Lewis mansion on this occasion. The well-known taste of Mrs. Lewis, the almost prodigal liberality of the father of the bridegroom, and the exquisite taste of the bride, combined, made the scene one of unparalleled magnificence, which will remain long in the memory of those present. We may be pardoned for saying that we thought we detected in the floral display the keen sense of the beautiful which has always distinguished the bridegroom, and which every lady within miles of the city has had occasion for many years to employ in her personal adornment.

"The ample rooms of the Lewis mansion were filled with the *crème de la crème* of New Canton, and many of the élite from Peoria and Chicago honored the nuptials with their presence.

"At precisely nine o'clock the bridal party were ushered into the grand parlors. The subdued strains of the 'Wedding March,' rendered in the most faultless style by the talented organist of the First Church, Miss Ganson (the elegant piano that has so long graced the Lewis mansion was never better employed), floated through the air and filled the rooms with a flood of melody. They took their position under an immense floral arch, and the Rev. Mr. Latimer, D.D., of the Presbyterian Church, stepped forward and, in a ceremony remarkable for its good taste, pronounced the happy words that united two fond hearts according to the beautiful formula of his church, and two loving souls were united indissolubly.

"The lovely bride was arrayed in a heavy white silk dress, low corsage, demitain, the sides looped up with orange flowers, and profusely trimmed with Valenciennes lace. Her brow was surmounted with a wreath of exquisite orange blossoms, from which issued the gauzy bridal-veil, which floated gracefully to the floor. She attracted the attention of all and presented a picture the like of which Raphael might have given half a thousand to have reproduced.

The groom appeared in the conventional black full-dress coat, faultless pantaloons, and white gloves and tie.

"The ladies present vied with each other in the magnificence of their toiletts, a number of them having been gotten up expressly for the occasion. It was the remark of several gentlemen present from Chicago that never in that city of luxury had they ever seen gathered together more elegantly attired ladies or more distinguished cavaliers.

"After the ceremony the happy pair received the congratulations of their many friends, who all united in wishing them the most perfect happiness, and that their life might flow on as peacefully as course of babbling brooks through summer meadows, with no dark clouds to ever cover their happy sky.

"The old veteran, Col. Peppernell, excited much amusement by comparing the appearance of the mansion, in its dazzling splendor, with the first wedding he attended in New Canton. The flowers then were gathered from the prairie, the bride was arrayed in calico and wore a smart white apron, and the groom sported on the occasion his best suit of Kentucky jenns. 'There were no crosses of flowers from Chicago,' said the Colonel; 'no table groaning with all the luxuries of the season; no silks and satins and velvets; no floors covered with cloth for dancing; but there was a log cabin, one room and a big fire at the end of it, and the refreshments were pumpkin pies and venison and hard cider—no champagne in them days. And the wedding presents—there was no silver cake-baskets and things; but we all chipped in and made up a purse for the couple to get 'em something to go to housekeepin'. I performed the ceremony, as a justice of the peace; and I gave 'em my fee (which was not a twenty-dollar gold piece) and a half-dollar besides. But we danced as long and were as jolly as we shall be to-night. Earthly grandeurs counts but for little.'

"It is a bold flight of the imagination and one can scarcely conceive of such a thing; but, if our hopes are realized, the wedding of ten years hence will excel this in grandeur as far as this exceeded the humble scene so graphically described by the distinguished president of the Land Company.

"The bridal presents—composed of many useful and ornamental articles, *vertu* and *bric-a-brac*—were rich and elegant in the extreme and excited the admiration of all. The following is a partial list of them. Want of space precludes a full enumeration:

"REV. MR. LATIMER AND WIFE: book-mark, with Bible, embroidered in two colors.

"MR. CHAS. BURT: deed of lot in Fourth Addition to New Canton.

"MRS. CHAS. BURT: silver cake basket.

"THOS. PADDLEFORD, SENIOR, father of the bridegroom: ten lots in Second Addition to New Canton, deeded directly to the bride.

"MRS. THOS. PADDLEFORD, mother of the bridegroom: set of solid silver spoons and richly plated knives.

"COL. SETH PEPPERNELL: to bride and bridegroom each a lot in Third Addition to New Canton.

"SQUIRE SHARP: lot in North Addition.

"CAPT. PEAK: lot in North Addition.

"MRS. CAPT. PEAK: silver-plated cake-basket.

"MRS. SQUIRE SHARP: silver napkin-ring.

"MRS. COL. PEPPERNELL: silver cake-basket.

"MRS. ABIGAIL THOMPSON: silver cake-basket.

"MRS. J. G. ROBINSON: silver napkin-ring.

"MR. AND MRS. PETTINGILL: silver cake-basket.

"MRS. PETER TORRENCE: elegant carved wooden salad-fork and spoon.

"MR. AND MRS. SAM'L. MARSH: silver cake-baskets.

"MR. AND MRS. PETTIGREW and DAUGHTERS: pair of silver napkin-rings.

"MR. AND MRS. SHUBAEL SANDERS: pair vases.

"MR. AND MRS. NAT. HAUGHTON: silver cake-basket.

"There were other presents equally valuable, from almost every family in the city, who took this method of testifying their respect for the happy pair."

[From the *Sentinel*.]
(The Paddlefords did not advertise in *The Sentinel* and the editor was not invited.)

"Thos. Paddleford, of the firm of Paddleford & Son, was married, Wednesday night, to Miss Mary Lewis. A very respectable company, in point of numbers, was present."

The next morning Tom Paddleford gazed at the presents, so ostentatiously displayed, and tried very hard to preserve a smiling exterior. But it was a failure. He turned away with disgust so plainly depicted on his features as to be visible to any one.

"Fifteen cake-baskets and thirty-one napkin-rings, and all of them plated except Ma's, and that I have to pay for. Popham, the jeweler, had a big stock on hand and closed 'em out cheap. We deal in the same goods, but nobody bought 'em of us. Bah!"

To be Continued.